

L. E. Vicker

November 22. 1911.

Glennines.

The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity

Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Theology
delivered to the University of Glasgow
in Sessions 1892-3 and 1895-6

PUBLISHED BY
JAMES MACLEHOSE AND SONS, GLASGOW
Publishers to the University.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., LONDON.
New York, - - The Macmillan Co.
London, - - - Simpkin, Hamilton and Co.
Cambridge, - - Macmillan and Bowes.
Edinburgh, - - Douglas and Foulis.

MDCCCXCIX.

The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity

By

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With a Memoir

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VOL. II.



Glasgow

James MacLehose and Sons

Publishers to the University

1899

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BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO.

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THE FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS OF CHRISTIANITY.

LECTURE IX.

THEORIES AS TO THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF EVIL.

2. THE THEORY OF NEGATION OR PRIVATION.

THE various theories which have been devised to explain the nature and origin of moral evil are attempts, in different ways, to answer the question, how, consistently with our belief in an infinite or absolutely perfect Being, we can account for the existence of that which we must conceive of as antagonistic to His nature or opposed to His will. If evil be not absolute, if it be not traceable to something independent of the mind and will of God and limiting His perfection, are we compelled to regard it as due to a contradictory element

within the divine nature—to a will which wills at once that which is good and that which is evil? Can we conceive of God as absolutely perfect, and yet as the author of that which limits His power, wisdom, and goodness? The inadequacy of most of the theories to solve this apparent contradiction is traceable to the imperfect notions of the relation of God to the world which I have examined in former lectures; and the only adequate solution is that which is based on the Christian doctrine of that relation, or on the idea of God as revealing or manifesting Himself in nature and in the spirit and life of man.

In the first place, what has been called the negative or privative theory of evil is the natural or necessary outgrowth of a *Pantheistic* view of God's relation to the world. According to this theory the introduction of a contradictory element into the nature of God, or the necessity of making God the author of evil, is met by a virtual evaporation of the existence of evil; in other words, by maintaining that what we call moral evil or sin, when closely examined, has no positive, essential reality; or, according to a modified form of the same theory, that it is involved in, or is only another name for, that imperfection which necessarily pertains to all finite being.

In the second place, it is only another form of the same theory of negation or limitation according to which the source of evil is supposed to lie, not simply in the finite, but more particularly in the sensuous nature of man, or in the conflict which necessarily arises between the flesh and the spirit, the sensuous and the rational elements of man's nature. Embodiment in a corporeal nature is the necessary condition of the individuality of each finite spirit; and, according to this theory, it is not the finite spirit simply as finite, but the relation of the finite spirit to its material or fleshly embodiment, which hinders it from becoming the pure organ of the divine or infinite spirit, and which creates that negative element in man's nature which is the essence of evil.

In the third place, the theory which, with various modifications, attempts to obviate the necessity of ascribing to God the causality of evil by tracing it simply to human freedom, owes its origin to that which we have designated the *Deistic* or abstractly Monotheistic conception of God's relation to the world. The possibility of sin, it is maintained, is involved in the very idea of moral agency. Virtue or goodness is obedience to an outward moral law or lawgiver; but

obedience, to have any moral value, must be that of a being who is capable of disobedience. Sin could only be prevented by such an interference with human freedom as would virtually destroy the nature of man as a moral agent.

Lastly, as, after a brief review of the more important of these theories, I shall attempt to show, the *Christian* doctrine of sin, in which lies the only adequate explanation of its nature and origin, springs out of that notion of God's relation to the world which, as we have seen, constitutes the fundamental principle of Christianity—the principle, namely, that God is essentially self-revealing, that it is of His very essence to manifest Himself in and to the finite world; in other words, that the finite spirit is the necessary organ of the being and life of God, and that this self-revelation implies in the finite spirit an element of distinction or difference, which contains in it at least the possibility of sin.

The first of the foregoing theories, that which resolves moral evil into negation or privation of being, meets us in the course of speculation, sometimes in a more superficial, sometimes in a more strictly reasoned and philosophical form; and in the latter, if not in the former, it is, as I have

said, the necessary outcome of a pantheistic view of God's relation to the world.

1. In its more popular form it attempts to avoid making God the author of evil by identifying moral evil with finitude, or with that imperfection which necessarily pertains to all finite being. It is a contradiction in terms to suppose that the Author of nature could create a world absolutely perfect; in other words, could impart His own infinitude to the finite. The Author of the world is the source of all that is positive or good in it, but He cannot be regarded as responsible for that imperfection or limitation which is the necessary character of any finite world. The cause or author of a being's existence is only the cause of what it is positively, but not of what it lacks or is not. The sculptor gives form and beauty to the marble, but he is not the cause of its lack of life. That the semi-transparent body is partially luminous is due to the source of light; that it is not perfectly luminous, to its own opaqueness. That the vessel in the stream moves at all is to be ascribed to the force of the current; that it moves with limited rapidity, to its own inertia. God is no more the cause of evil than the sun is the cause of darkness and coldness, or the painter or sculptor of the

absence of life and motion in the work of art. The amount of good communicated to any being is conditioned, not merely by the will and power of the giver, but by the nature of the receiver.

It is true that, in the case of human givers, the utmost which the giver chooses to bestow may fall far short of the receptivity of the object on which he operates. The benefactor who relieves the wants of the poor is not the cause of their remaining poverty ; he is responsible for it only if his resources admit of a less stinted charity. But, in the case of the relation of the divine benefactor to man, it is not the goodness of the former but the nature of the latter that presents an insuperable obstacle to the removal of an imperfection, which is of the very essence of all finite being. God is the source of all the positive good that is in the world ; the imperfection and evil are due to the inherent limitation of the finite.

To the theory of negation in the form in which I have now stated it, the objections are so obvious that the only wonder is that it should have imposed on some of the greatest minds in the history of human thought. The most cogent of these objections is, that it destroys the moral view of evil by identifying it with the metaphysical

notion of finitude or limitation; and that, even if this notion should be accepted, limitation or imperfection, in order to be evil, must be conceived of as the falling short, not of an unattainable but of an attainable ideal.

(a) The first of these objections—that which turns on the abstract notion of limitation or negation—will be more appropriately dealt with under the second or more strictly philosophical form of the doctrine in question. Here it may be enough to remark that, apart from metaphysical argument, it is an obvious weakening of moral evil to reduce it simply to negation or non-attainment. At most we could embrace under this category only such sins as are traceable to deficiency, sins, that is, of ignorance or infirmity, not sins which involve a positive activity of the will of the agent. Even with respect to the former class, the ignorance or infirmity which is or leads to evil must be, not invincible, but voluntary and avoidable. Natural imperfection, with its necessary results, is no more culpable than bodily disease or mental weakness or aberration. But there is a vast range of evil which cannot be brought under the definition of negation or natural limitation. The greatest number of sins are not those of

non-attainment, or falling short of ideal perfection, or even of conscious acquiescence in a lower as compared with a higher possible good ; rather they are sins which betray a measure of positive activity, sometimes an intense activity, of will. It would be a ludicrous euphemism to describe such sins as treachery, lying, theft, malice, revenge, murder, as moral defects or shortcomings. Moreover, even in the case of sins which in one sense are purely negative, or which do not betray themselves by positive external action, a silent but most real force of will is often operative. To refuse to listen to the call of duty, to stand still when the claims of affection, patriotism, philanthropy are pressing upon us, and, wherever any personal risk or cost or sacrifice is involved in helping others, to hold back and do nothing—this seemingly negative attitude may sometimes be the result of a fierce inward struggle of the meaner with the nobler nature ; or where it is not, it betrays a force of selfishness all the more intense that it acts with the unconscious but imperious activity of a second nature.

(*b*) But a second objection to the theory in question is, that imperfection, in order to be moral, must be the falling short of an attainable, not

of an unattainable or impossible standard. To identify sin with imperfection is the same thing as to confound absolute with relative goodness. The infinite is the only absolutely perfect, but there is nevertheless a perfection which is possible for the finite. For goodness does not consist in the attainment of an absolute standard, but in being adequate to our own; not in the fulfilment of any ideal, but in acting up to the highest we know, and at the same time striving after the knowledge of a higher. Evil, on the other hand, is not a falling short of the absolutely highest, but of the highest we know and are capable of reaching. Each lower order of being is imperfect compared with those which are higher, and all finite beings compared with the infinite; but each has its own ideal type or standard, by the realization or non-realization of which its true perfection or imperfection is determined. It is no defect in the plant that it cannot fly, nor in the irrational animal that it cannot reflect and reason, nor in man that his body is not immortal or his mind omniscient. It may even be said that, within its own sphere, a living progressive being is capable of different perfections, or of a perfection which at every successive moment is passing into im-

perfection. The germ or bud may be perfect, though it does not possess the perfection of the full-grown flower. Childhood is imperfect as compared with manhood, but it has an ideal of its own, to attain to or fall short of which is its perfection or imperfection. The only perfect man was one who did not leap at once into a full-blown maturity, intellectual or moral any more than physical, but who grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man; yet was He perfect from the beginning: His childhood, boyhood, youth, had each a relative perfectness of its own, and His whole human life that moral and spiritual perfectness which lies, not in the transcending of the limits of the finite, but in the finite spirit becoming the perfect organ of the infinite.

2. The more strictly philosophical and thorough-going form of the theory of negation or privation is, as I have said, that in which it is directly traceable to a pantheistic conception of God's relation to the world. The popular objection to Pantheism is that, by identifying God with the world, it makes God the author of evil. But, as we formerly saw, such an objection is no longer relevant to Pantheism when we examine into its

fundamental principle and essence. Pantheism supersedes all inquiry into the authorship of moral evil by reducing it to nonentity. Evil in itself, it points out, has no positive or affirmative reality; and the reality we ascribe to it is due only to what may be called the illusion of the finite, the fictitious substantiality which, when we look at things only from a partial and individual point of view, imagination ascribes to things that are unreal and insubstantial. As error or falsehood has no positive reality, but is only the irrational, putting on for the moment the guise of rationality, so sin is only the unreal, assuming the semblance of the real. And as, for the mind that grasps the truth, error vanishes away into nothingness, so for an intelligence that could contemplate all things from the point of view of the infinite, or "under the form of eternity," evil would be seen to be only a phantom that dissolves before the light. According to the well-known dictum of Spinoza, all determination is negation. Figures in space, for example, have no positive, but only a negative, reality. The appearance of reality which belongs to them, is got only by cutting them off by artificial boundaries from the infinite space which is in them and around them. Their very essence is negation,

privation, want of being. Break down or obliterate the artificial limits, and they cease to be. Their arbitrary existence passes away into that boundless extension which is the only reality. In like manner, any apparent reality which pertains to finite beings, material or spiritual, is not positive but negative ; it expresses, not what they are, but what they are not. It is due to the false abstraction by which we determine or mark off a portion of being from that pure indeterminate Being which is the only absolute reality.

From this point of view we can see how, for a thorough-going Pantheism, the terms good and evil, virtue and vice, have either no meaning at all or a meaning different from that which ordinary thought attaches to them. They gain a meaning only in virtue of the fictitious independence or individuality which imagination ascribes to finite beings. We condemn or approve the actions of ourselves and others, because we ascribe to each individual a self from which these actions spring. But if the notion of an independent finite self is an illusion, if its only being is non-being, then self-denial and selfishness and all the kindred virtues and vices are evaporated with the self to which we ascribe them. We create fictitious standards of human perfection, and

judge men according as they fulfil or fall short of them ; we regard men as good or evil, better or worse, in view of this arbitrary ideal. But inasmuch as the only perfection is that of the infinite, and no finite being can be nearer the infinite than another, our moral differences are lost in that universal negativity or nothingness which pertains to all finite agents alike.

A theory which thus resolves sin into negation or non-entity may seem scarcely to call for serious refutation. The consideration of it, however, is of indirect value, as a step towards a higher and more tenable solution of the problem. The objections to it are mainly those which, as we have seen, apply to a pantheistic view of God's relation to the world, and which need not now be restated. But there are two of these objections the special application of which to the subject before us may here be pointed out.

In the first place, if we look for a moment to the abstract antithesis of affirmation and negation, it is to be considered that negation is not resolvable simply into non-entity or nothingness. In the intelligible world, negation forms as essential an element as affirmation, and each of the ideas so designated is unthinkable apart from the other. An element of negation enters into all reality, even

the highest. An infinite which is pure affirmation without negation, and a finite which is pure negation without affirmation, are equally impossible conceptions. You cannot think or form an idea of anything without distinguishing or determining what it is from what it is not ; you cannot pronounce of it what it is not, apart from the conception of what it is. In the system of the universe all realities, from the lowest to the highest, involve the presence of both elements, and there is no reality which can be conceived of as a simply positive, self-identical unity. Reality is always unity in difference.

Moreover, as objects rise in the scale of being, the element of negation becomes more intense ; and so far from the highest of all beings, the infinite unity, being that in which the element of negation vanishes, it is rather to be thought of as that in which all possible determinations or negations are embraced. In other words, elevation of nature is marked, not by an approximation to, but by a further distance from, pure indeterminate being. In inorganic material substances, for example, negation has a function as essential as affirmation. No material substance is a simple undifferentiated unity. In the stone that lies seemingly moveless and self-identical, there are present intense oppositions of

attraction and repulsion, force and resistance ; and its very immobility is the result of the equipoise of affirmations and negations, of activities straining against and counteracting each other.

If we add to this the element of motion, as in the projectile, the falling stone, the revolving planet, the new element is the expression in a deeper way of the presence and inseparable unity of positive and negative, of affirmation and negation. For, if we ask ourselves what the conception of motion involves,—in the first place, we cannot conceive of it without including in our thought the negation of rest, and if we try to think of either motion or rest by itself, it inevitably becomes indistinguishable from the other, or ceases to be thinkable. And, in the second place, motion, uniform or accelerated, can only be conceived of as the unity of that which ‘is’ and that which ‘is not.’ It *is*, but for no infinitesimal fraction of time can we say of it, ‘it is here and not there.’ Hereness and thereeness are incessantly passing out of and into each other, and position is subjected at every passing moment to the dominion of negation.

If, again, we rise to organic substances, the element of negation has a still higher and more comprehensive *rôle* to perform. In the plant or the

animal body there is at once the affirmation and negation of the mere mechanical and chemical relations of the inorganic world. The laws of the inorganic world are not annihilated in the living substance ; their activity is only negated in the sense of being taken up into the higher activity or affirmation of organization and life. Moreover, within the living body, each individual member or organ includes in it as the very condition of its existence, at once affirmation and negation. You cannot determine it save with reference to its limits and relations. It is not a mere self-identical thing existing in and for itself; it exists through what is not itself or other than itself, namely, the other members which in one sense are outside of it; and its health, its vitality, its essential nature, is maintained only in negating its mere isolated being, and in entering into action and reaction with the other members of the organic whole or unity which embraces all their differences.

Further, the ideal nature of the organism is not immediate, but is reached by a process of growth or development ; and development is not the addition of the same to the same, but involves perpetual negation of sameness, negation solved at each successive stage in a higher and richer affirmation ; and its final perfection is the annulling of all the

prior stages and their reaffirmation, absorbed and transformed, in the unity of the completely developed whole.

It is, however, when we rise into the region of intelligence or self-consciousness, that we reach the highest opposition of affirmation and negation. The element of negativity, so far from being reducible to mere nothingness, constitutes an essential factor of the spiritual life, and manifests itself therein in its intensest form. The realm of knowledge and moral action is one the very existence of which is maintained by the perpetual play and reconciliation of antagonisms; and its unity is the highest of all unities, just because it is the solution of the profoundest of all oppositions or distinctions. For into the very essence of a self-conscious nature there enters the supreme opposition of self and not-self, of the thinking subject and the object thought-of; and the whole life of spirit, theoretical and practical, has for its secret spring and nerve the perpetual positing of this opposition and its perpetual transcendence. Remove either of these elements, and the other becomes a meaningless, unthinkable abstraction.

Lastly, it is the same principle which applies to that distinction of finite and infinite, which

Pantheism, in resolving the former into the latter, misinterprets. We cannot conceive of the infinite as the purely indeterminate; for that which has no determinations is indistinguishable from non-entity. It is not the finite only which becomes nothing, when absolutely opposed to the infinite, but the infinite also, when absolutely opposed to the finite. The infinite which we reach by abstracting from the finite, becomes itself only an abstraction. It is true that, even as an abstraction, it is necessarily, if only negatively, related to that from which we abstract. But if we retain and try to think it in the region of abstraction, the effort becomes an impossible one. For a bare self-identical infinite is an infinite of which nothing can be said and nothing thought; which we cannot think of as either living or lifeless, intelligent or unintelligent, good or evil; for to think it would be to qualify or determine it, that is, to reduce it from pure indeterminateness. To make it a possible object of thought, it must qualify or determine itself, it must relate itself to that which is other than itself; in other words, it must be an infinite which contains in its own essence the element of the finite. On the other hand, a finite to which the infinite relates itself, cannot be

the mere negation of the infinite. As we have already seen, a nature that is conscious of its own finitude shows thereby that it has already transcended its finitude, that it is not merely negatively but positively related to that which is beyond the finite. The discovery of the vanity, evanescence, and unreality of our life apart from God, is the discovery at the same time that our true and real life is in God. Conscious negativity is something more than nothingness. The negation that belongs to the finite is only a step in the process by which we rise to the affirmation of a higher unity, the essential unity of the human spirit with the divine.

This leads me to the second objection to the negative or privative theory, namely, that it depletes the notion of sin of any moral and spiritual element. It leaves unexplained, in the moral sphere, the consciousness of guilt, in the religious sphere, the sense of estrangement from God. If evil be that which ought not to be, it is impossible to identify it with finitude or limitation of being. A merely quantitative finite has no other meaning than that of being the contradictory of the infinite; that such a finite should not fall short of or should cease to be opposed to the infinite, would be a con-

tradition in terms. The notion of moral evil or sin implies, as we have seen, that it is the falling short of an attainable standard, the non-realization of the ideal of one's nature; and to bring the negation of the infinite under this notion, there must be a sense in which the infinite is not the contradiction, but the truth of the finite, the object or end in which alone man's nature can be perfectly realized. And this again implies that a nature for which sin is possible must be one which, in being opposed to the infinite, is in contradiction with itself, in a state of inward disharmony or conflict. Opposition to a merely external power or will is not necessarily evil, and can only become evil when the external authority is one which we ought to obey, obligation to which is recognized as the law of our nature, obedience to which is, in one sense, obedience to ourselves, disobedience to which is disobedience to ourselves. The discord, therefore, in which sin consists must be the discord of an infinite with a finite element, both of which are in our own nature; and the solution of that discord implies that there is a sense in which the finite is no longer the contradictory of the infinite, in which the seemingly impassable barrier between them can be broken down, and the finite can rise

into participation in the very life and being of the infinite.

Now, if we ask what this infinite and what this finite element in man's nature is, and how we are to conceive of the conflict between them out of which sin arises—the answers to these questions will carry us beyond the theory of negation or privation, and compel us to examine some of the other theories that have been propounded as to the nature and source of evil.

Meantime, let me say that it is only by viewing man's nature as a nature in which an essentially infinite element is contained, that the direst aspect of moral evil and of the results it involves can be discerned. A life lived only for the finite, for the attainment of finite ends and the satisfaction of finite desires, would be innocent and harmless, if man's nature were wholly finite. What makes such a life evil, is to be seen only when we consider it in the light of its inherent capabilities, and of the self-contradiction it involves; or, in simpler language, when we think of the wasted powers and misdirected aims, the ruin and wretchedness of a nature made for God, when it squanders itself on shallow and finite satisfactions. Nor, in order to see the full meaning of this thought, is it enough simply

to contrast, as picturesque writers have often done, the original greatness of man's nature with the degradation and ruin into which it has fallen through sin. Pascal and the Puritan writer, Howe, for instance, have employed such analogies as that of a "ruined temple" or a "dethroned monarch" to lend force to the representation of the misery of man's fallen state. The pity we feel for fallen greatness, for the abject poverty of the man who has seen better days, for the squalor and indigence of one who once revelled in princely affluence, is of another and deeper kind than is awakened by the condition of the born beggar. The sight of an edifice originally mean and unlovely does not affect us with the same mournful impression as when we visit the scene over which war and destructive violence have passed, and stand in contemplation of the ruin of some fair palace or stately temple—of the scathed and shattered columns, the broken arches, the half-buried fragments of exquisite tracery, the indications of the vast extent and architectural splendour that pertained to the original structure, but which are now only faintly traceable amidst dust and foulness. So, as these writers would represent to us, it is when we discern in man's ruined nature the indications of an infinitely exalted

origin and destiny that we have the true measure of sin's destructive power.

But these and similar pictorial analogies fall short of the reality they would depict in this respect, that the contrast they present is only that of the past with the present condition of man's nature, of a greatness in it that is gone, with its existing meanness and degradation. But the true contrast is rather between a greatness and a meanness which are, both alike, present in every sinful soul; in other words, between an inalienable and indestructible infinitude, which is the true ideal and essence of man's nature, and the base and inadequate ends on which it wastes itself. In a life of purely sensuous or worldly enjoyment, considered simply in itself, there is nothing wrong or deplorable. To find our satisfaction in the pleasures of appetite and sense would be a harmless thing, if we were made for nothing better. If there were in the structure of our being nothing of larger and wider range than the things of time and sense, our satisfaction in these things would be as innocent and as little productive of shame and misery as the contentment of browsing cattle or the satiated appetite of a beast of prey. But it is the fact that in a spiritual nature made in the image of God there is an infinite element which, without its

ceasing to be spiritual, can never be obliterated or extinguished—capacities of knowledge, love, aspiration, self-sacrifice, of a life devoted to infinite ends, of a blessedness in communion with God which is as inexhaustible as its object,—it is this which lends its specially appalling aspect to an evil life, and which is the secret of its inherent wretchedness. For every such life involves in its aims an essential impossibility—the impossibility of making finite satisfactions adequate to infinite desires, of quenching boundless capacities and aspirations by things that are not commensurate with even this passing life, of satiating an infinite hunger by feeding on the husks which can appease only the appetites of an animal. And, let me add, it is this which throws light on the true meaning of what we call shame, remorse, the pain and anguish of an awakened conscience. Even in natures in which on the whole there is little moral sensibility, the unconsciousness of guilt is never absolute. It may be dulled or deadened by evil habit; but unless man could cease to be man, it is there, inextricably involved in the very essence of his nature, and by no suicidal act can it ever be extinguished. Even in the soul of the lowest slave of appetite there is enough of the divine image left to make it capable of avenging its injuries on itself.

There are almost always moments of reaction in the most godless and degraded life, when what we call the voice of conscience speaks out, and the man is made to wince under that worst of all tortures, self-loathing and self-contempt. And if we ask what this means, what is the secret of those flashes of remorse and self-disgust, those visitations, however transient; of moral perturbation and foreboding, from which few or no sinful men can wholly escape; I answer, they are the voice of the unextinguished divinity within us, the witness, it may be the last and only witness, to the greatness of a nature made for God. A nature not so made would be incapable of such wretchedness: and that our nature is capable of it is the proof that, though it may cast off every other vestige of its divine origin, it retains at least this one terrible prerogative of it, the capacity of preying on itself.

LECTURE X.

THEORIES AS TO THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF EVIL.

3. THE PREDOMINANCE OF SENSE OVER SPIRIT.

THERE are many considerations which lend plausibility to the notion that the explanation of the nature and genesis of evil is to be found in the antagonism of flesh and spirit, of the sensuous tendencies and impulses with the higher aims and possibilities of our rational and spiritual nature. It is the strange characteristic of man's nature that it contains in it elements that are not only diverse but discordant, tendencies and capacities which are apparently, not merely heterogeneous but irreconcilable, and which, in point of fact, are in perpetual warfare with each other. On the one hand, he belongs to the kingdom of nature, is composed physically of the same elements and determined by the same laws as the material

world, and is a creature of appetites, impulses, and passions which are common to him with the lower animals. On the other hand, he belongs to the realm of spirit, of intelligence, of moral life, the nature and attributes of which—so at least it is plausibly stated—we can only conceive of as absolutely opposed to those of matter and the material world, and even to those of the animal creation. If matter be extended and infinitely divisible, mind can only be thought of as an indivisible unity, incapable of division or disintegration. If matter be passive, subjected in all its states and changes to a law of external causation, it is of the very essence of mind to rise above the realm of outward or physical force, and to be the source of its own thoughts and volitions.

And the same contrariety obtains, it would seem, in man's spiritual, as compared with his sensuous or animal nature. As a particular bodily organism, with its physical form and structure, its sensitive capacities, its impulses and appetites, each human being is simply one individual existence in a world of individual existences, limited in space and time, and though externally related to other objects, incapable of rising above the experiences of its own narrow and bounded life. In his spiritual

nature, on the other hand, he is no longer merely one particular individual amongst other individuals, seeing that he has in him that principle of thought or intelligence, for which all things and beings are, which is present to all objects yet identical with none of them, and without relation to which neither he nor any other being has any existence or reality. As a conscious self, in other words, he has in him a principle which is the presupposition and basis of all objective existence. However poor and imperfect a man's actual attainments in knowledge may be, self-consciousness is in him a capacity which no multiplicity of particular experiences can exhaust, and which, as the form of an infinite content, allies him in essence to the creative source of all finite being. As material, he is akin to the lowest member of the animal creation, nay, to the very earth on which he treads. As spiritual, he can claim affinity to God and the things that are unseen and eternal.

And the same contrast, it is asserted, obtains between the objects of the natural desires, and the object or end in which the spiritual nature finds its satisfaction. The former are ever particular and limited, the latter is universal and infinite. As regards the sensuous appetites, the

point of satisfaction is soon reached ; but the desires of the spirit, the satisfactions of the moral nature, overleap all actual experience. The physical appetites and desires have no outlook beyond immediate gratification or the satisfaction of the moment ; in each particular satisfaction they find for the time an adequate and complete fulfilment ; and though the craving of appetite may revive, it revives only as another isolated feeling, to receive only an equally limited and isolated satisfaction. But whilst it is possible to satisfy the sensuous desires, it is never possible to satisfy the spiritual self. The spiritual nature is, or contains in it, the silent prophecy of a future which makes satisfaction with the present for ever impossible ; it is the presence in us of an ideal to which no actual attainments in knowledge and goodness can ever be adequate.

Lastly, if we may follow the striking antithetic statement of Kant, the corporeal and sensuous is divided from the spiritual nature by the irreconcilable opposition of necessity and freedom. The appetites and impulses of our lower nature are blind and unreflecting tendencies, seeking their ends unconsciously, and under a law of necessity. And though the living organism rises above in-

organic matter in so far as it is capable of feelings of pleasure and pain, yet in the purely animal nature such feelings are awakened instinctively, and under external stimulus which it can neither resist nor modify; and the relation between want and satisfaction, desire and fulfilment, is as independent of reflection and volition as the relation of a stone to the force of gravity, or of one chemical element to another with which it combines. The moral and spiritual consciousness, on the other hand, seems to lift us out of the order of nature into a region where blind necessity and external causation have no place. It involves, as its fundamental presupposition, a capacity of self-determination, of original activity independent of outward circumstances, of being authors of our own actions and architects of our own character. It is of its very essence that its aims and ends should not be those to which it is directed blindly and unresistingly, but those which it consciously sets before itself as ideas of its intelligence and determinations of its will. It is far, indeed, from being lawless; its freedom is no unconditioned caprice, but the law to which a rational and moral nature is subject, is one with which its own essence is in absolute affinity; the imperative it is called to obey is part

and parcel of its own consciousness, and the most absolute submission to that imperative is identical with perfect freedom.

Such are some of the considerations which have given rise to that theory of evil, which finds its explanation in the relation of the sensuous to the spiritual nature of man. The principle on which it is based seems to be this, that the native tendencies of the higher nature, which are all on the side of good, are repressed, thwarted, overborne, by the antagonistic tendencies of the lower nature, from which, it would seem, there is no escape. If man were pure spirit unfettered by matter and material conditions, the range both of his intellectual and of his moral activity would be practically boundless. It is the presence of a foreign and heterogeneous element that hinders and represses its inherent aims and aspirations, and hangs like a deadweight on its native energies. If its powers of intelligence had never been impeded by the claims of a corporeal and corruptible organization with which it is inseparably united; if the satisfaction of those universal and illimitable capacities by which the spirit is allied to the infinite and eternal, had known no disturbance from the demands of the bodily appetites and

passions ; then, instead of being dragged down to the region of nature and blind necessity, it would have been left to expatiate for ever in its native realm of freedom ; no taint of sensuous desire would ever have sullied its pure affections, no yielding to the inevitable claims of the flesh would have hindered or arrested its progress in goodness and happiness. But it is not so. The moral history of man, instead of being the unbroken expression of his higher nature, is the result, at best wavering and uncertain, of a perpetual strife between heterogeneous and contradictory tendencies. From the loftier aims and aspirations of the spirit he is ever distracted by the gross physical necessities ; the law in the members wars against the law in the mind, and the former, if it do not quell, at least limits and represses the influence of the latter. The serene flow of the spiritual life is ever disturbed and harassed, often counteracted, by the degrading force of the lusts of the flesh ; and moral excellence, instead of being a natural, uniform, and continuous development, is attainable, if at all, only as the result of a long and protracted struggle.

Moreover, when we examine the nature of the conflict, it is seen to be by no means an equal

one. The pleasures of sense are immediate and certain; the satisfaction of the higher nature, distant, and of slow and uncertain attainment. To appreciate the former, nothing is needed beyond the natural appetites and instincts which are common to all. To see and feel the value of the latter, to discern the beauty and blessedness of things spiritual, demands an exercise of the spiritual intelligence, a measure of moral culture which comes only by long effort and self-discipline. Besides, it may be said that, of the two hostile tendencies, the lower and carnal has the immense advantage of prior and long undisputed possession. The order of human life is, first that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The life of the child, or of the member of a rude and undeveloped race, is little removed from that of the animal. The sensuous impulses have been long active ere the awakening of self-consciousness comes. The former have acquired the strength of habit, the prescriptive right to rule, before the latter begins to put forth its claims. Thus, even if the moral and spiritual nature had started into life full-armed, a combined and consolidated force of sensuous desires is ready to dispute its authority.

But, as we know, the moral life is by no means

complete, or in full possession of its power from the outset. The moral conflict is at first the unequal one in which feeling, inclination, passion, are on the one side, and only unimpassioned deference to authority on the other. There may come a time in the spiritual history of a man when the moral law shall be recognized as the expression of his own deepest nature, when the voice of duty shall be a voice that speaks *in* him and not merely *to* him, and when obedience to it shall be obedience, not to the imperative of an arbitrary power constraining him, but to an irresistible influence that is one with his own will. But at the beginning it is not so. At the dawn of the moral life, duty has for us the aspect of a foreign and arbitrary rule. It reveals itself in a dim sense of obligation, a deference we cannot explain to external commands and prohibitions, which run counter to inclination and the current of our spontaneous life. On the one side there is, therefore, the force of passion, the habitual bent of nature and natural desire; on the other, only the loveless law of right, the cold, stern, passionless presence of duty, with as yet no smile upon her face. No wonder then that the issue of the conflict should be, what so often in human ex-

perience it is, and that the sensuous passions should prove to be unequally matched against the undeveloped and immature moral nature.

1. In criticising this theory, it is to be remarked in the first place, that if mind and matter, spirit and sense, were so absolutely heterogeneous as it represents, no conflict could ever arise between them. Two physical forces may be opposed to each other and the result will be determined by their relative strength. Two mental or spiritual forces, two scientific or philosophical theories, two desires, passions, moral tendencies, may contend for the mastery over the human mind and will; and the issue will be decided by the relative cogency of argument or the relative intensity of the appeal to individual susceptibility. But no such conflict can arise between things which have no essential relation to each other or which belong, each to a totally different order from the other. The power of a physical agent cannot be counteracted by argument, nor a mental conviction destroyed—though this has too often been tried—by the agency of fire and sword. Magnetic attraction cannot contend with mental alienation, nor can we attempt to overcome mechanical repulsion by love and sympathy.

If, therefore, sense and spirit, body and mind,

sensuous appetites and affections and spiritual aims and aspirations, were, as this theory implies, absolutely heterogeneous, no antagonism could ever arise between them, a deteriorating influence exerted by the one on the other would be inconceivable. If it is of the very essence of spiritual and sensuous activities that the one should be self-determined and the other under a law of necessity, if bodily appetites and desires are, by their definition, blind, unconscious tendencies, and spiritual desires have the principle of self-consciousness for their very essence,—it is obvious that betwixt things so disparate, of either of which we can only pronounce that it is what the other is not, no opposition or contention is possible. The spiritual consciousness could no more be affected by bodily appetites than by the force of gravity; it would be as insensible to the lusts of the flesh as to the disintegrating power of the weather. A moral motive could no more be influenced by a sensuous passion than it could be melted by heat or frozen by cold. Only on one condition can there be any talk of a conflict between the higher and lower nature, if, namely, there be a sense in which mind is capable of becoming materialized or matter of becoming spiritualized. On any other supposition human

nature would be a merely external and artificial combination of independent and incoherent factors. Soul and body might exist side by side, but they would not constitute a real unity. The sensuous appetites and impulses, when transferred to the nature of man and so brought into mere outward contiguity with the spiritual nature, would still be devoid of moral character. The sensuous and spiritual elements would exist neither in, nor for, each other. The satisfactions proper to both—to the desires of the spirit and the lusts of the flesh—might go on simultaneously or alternately, but in the unlimited activity of the latter there would be no antagonism to the former; the most unbounded sensuous indulgences would be as innocent in the human agent as in the case of the lower animals, in which they are neither good nor evil.

2. But I go on to remark, in the second place, that this theory, though not a perfect solution of the problem, has a deeper basis than that on which it is generally made to rest. Betwixt flesh and spirit, the sensuous and the spiritual in man's nature, there is no such hard and fast division as would preclude both reciprocal relation and opposition, both conflict and harmony. Apart from the general principle that it is thought or intelligence that gives reality,

not merely to outward material nature, but also to what is natural in ourselves, to our bodily organization, our sensuous wants, our animal desires and passions ; it is further to be considered that the latter are no longer in man what they are in the purely animal and irrational nature. The sensuous appetites and passions acquire a new character when they become constituent elements in the life of a self-conscious, self-determining being. As motives to human action, they lose their purely animal characteristics ; they cease to be what they are in the animal—blind impulses acting under a law of physical necessity and pointing to satisfactions which are limited and transient ; they have infused into them a new element, or undergo a transforming process, in virtue of which they are raised out of the sphere of nature into that of spirit, and become rivals of the higher desires and aspirations of the spirit on their own ground.

In the first place, they are no longer blind or instinctive. It is, as we have seen, of the very nature of a purely animal impulse that it determines the subject of it unconsciously. Want and satisfaction are connected by a process of which *it* knows nothing. It is as little aware of the end it seeks, as a projectile of the path it describes or a plant

of the ideal to which it grows. But no such blind impulse can ever become a motive to moral action. As entering into the experience of a spiritual nature, the light of self-consciousness is shed upon it, and it becomes aware at once of itself and of the end to which it points. So, again, as motives to human action, the appetites and desires of the animal nature lose the character of physical necessity and are elevated, so to speak, into the realm of freedom. A purely natural impulse determines the subject of it necessarily and unresistingly. Nature acts on and in the animal—if, at least, the animal is to be conceived as a purely irrational being—through its impulses; and its behaviour under the pressure of appetite or desire is as much a natural event as the motion of a stone under the action of gravity or the liquefaction of a metal under the action of heat.

But, in the animal impulse which constitutes a motive of moral action, a wholly new element comes into play. There is interposed here the activity of a permanent, self-determining subject, which distinguishes itself from all its passions and impulses, which can lay an arrest upon or resist those of them which are the most intense and potent, and which, when it yields to any one of

them, transforms it into the desire for a good, with which the permanent self, the spiritual essence of the man, has identified itself. Hence, the result is not properly described as the satisfaction of an impulse, but rather as the satisfaction of the self through the instrumentality of the impulse.

Lastly, when they become motives to human action, the appetites and desires of the animal nature may be said to lose the limited, bounded, transient character which belongs to them as such, and to become in a sense participants in the universality and infinitude which pertain to the realm of spirit. It is true, indeed, that no particular sensuous satisfactions, nor any number of such satisfactions, can be adequate to, or capable of fulfilling, the boundless capacities of the spiritual nature; and that, even if every animal and sensuous desire were gratified to the utmost, the spirit, the self-conscious self, would yet remain as far from satisfaction as ever. But the possibility of a conflict between flesh and spirit, between the desires of the lower or sensuous nature and the aims and aspirations of reason and conscience, arises from this, that the self-conscious nature reflects, so to speak, a spurious universality and boundlessness on the former, and when it seems to yield to them

is only yielding to the fictitious attractiveness, the semblance of its own infinitude, with which it has invested them. An animal impulse, regarded in itself, has no other end than the satisfaction of a natural want; but an animal impulse in a spiritual, self-conscious nature, becomes the means by which that nature *seeks to realize itself*. And, though man is infinitely more than any particular desire, though no sensuous gratification, nor any repetition of such gratifications, can ever be commensurate with the capacities of the spiritual self; though, in other words, the keenest joys of sense leave the infinite void unfilled; yet, ever-recurring failure does not serve to dissipate the illusion by which we ascribe to sensuous pleasure a capacity to satisfy the soul. The conflict between flesh and spirit, therefore, is not the conflict between an animal and a rational being, or between a purely animal part of our nature and a purely rational and spiritual; it is the far more intense strife between the higher or spiritual nature, and the lower or animal nature armed with a false and spurious spirituality.

If, then, the foregoing considerations lead to the conclusion that the two elements in man's nature, the flesh and the spirit, are by no means so divided

and disparate as to preclude the possibility of conflict between them, and enable us to see in some measure what the nature of that conflict is, the question has now to be asked, whether we can find in this conflict and its result, that is, in the predominance of flesh over spirit, in the conquest of the higher or spiritual by the sensuous nature of man, an explanation of the nature and source of sin.

There are, I think, various considerations which seem to show that this theory cannot be regarded as an adequate solution of the problem before us.

1. In the first place, there are many forms of evil, many sins and vices, which have no connection with man's sensuous or animal nature. Such vices as pride, ambition, avarice, or selfishness, envy, malice, hatred, revenge, have no direct affinity with the sensuous impulses, nor can they be said to yield to those who are guilty of them any sensuous satisfaction. Even sensuous pleasures themselves not seldom owe their attraction to something other and deeper than man's animal nature. It is often, for example, not the mere craving for drink that leads to intemperance. To drown care in forgetfulness, to silence the stings of conscience, to quicken the play of imagination, to quell cowardice and create a

spurious courage—these are temptations which appeal only to a self-conscious nature, and of which the excitement and gratification of animal appetite form no ingredient, or at best only a subordinate ingredient. They derive their fuel from passions which are of a purely spiritual nature, or which arise out of social relations possible only to intelligent, self-conscious beings ; and they act with a fatal, imperious influence on natures for which the sensuous vices have no attraction. Nay, so far from being connected with sensuous indulgence, there are many forms of vice which lead to the renunciation and repression of sensuous tendencies. Avarice will sometimes surpass the self-denial of the pure and temperate, or even the physical macerations of the saint ; will quell in a nature, otherwise prone to sensuous pleasure, any temptation to vicious excess, and will maintain through long years a superiority to self-indulgence, as lofty and sustained as that of the man who is governed by rational and moral principle.

2. Again, the inadequacy of the theory which would explain sin by sensuous impulse, will be seen by reflecting that, on its own showing, the seat of sin lies, not in the sensuous impulses, but in the will that yields to them. The flesh could never

conquer the spirit, if there were not in the latter something to which it appeals. It is only a superficial view of the moral conflict, which sees in it a struggle between opposite forces of which the stronger necessarily prevails. It is not always the strongest passion which wins the day. In the moral conflict, the issue on the side of right is often achieved where the sensuous susceptibilities are those which are keenest, and are such as, if left to themselves, so to speak, would sweep the field. The will of man, in other words, cannot be represented simply as the prize for the possession of which flesh and spirit contend. We are merely using the language of metaphor when we apply the notion of external force to the phenomena of spirit, and speak of the will as overpowered by sensuous impulse, or of appetite and passion proving too strong for the feebler motives of reason and conscience. To speak thus, is to leave out of account the all-important consideration that the will is never passive between contending impulses, and that it is according as it throws its weight into, or identifies itself with, one or other of the combatants, that the issue is determined.

For the sensuous impulses are but one of the conditions which make a moral choice possible. It

is only by a false abstraction that we resolve moral action into motives and volition, or, otherwise expressed, into a faculty called the will and certain motives acting on it from without. In every so-called motive, to make it operative, the will is already present. In the spiritual sphere, it is the moving body that itself creates the energy by which it is moved. The impulse or passion that rules the will is what the will itself makes it. The materials for moral action, the factors which determine the result, are not fully enumerated, when we specify, on the one hand, the moral imperative, the law of right and the recognition or response it calls forth in the reason and conscience, and, on the other hand, the sensuous desires and passions craving for satisfaction. These are but the antecedents or conditions of action; there is yet another all-potent agency on which the issue depends. It is the will, the self-conscious, self-determining self, that which constitutes the inner spirit and essence of the man, which flings its weight into either scale and so decides the result. Men may lay the blame of their sins on their passions, but unless man can become a mere animal, and as irresponsible as an animal, it is not passion, but the will that could have resisted and yet yields, which must bear the blame. In the moral career the

animal in us can never take the bit in its mouth, unless the charioteer voluntarily lets go the reins. Thus neither the moral imperative nor the sensuous passions have any moral significance for us, till we take them up into our consciousness and by a supreme act of self-determination identify ourselves with them, make them our own, part and parcel of our very selves.

But if this be so, it is no longer in either the lower or higher nature, or in their conflict with each other, or in the ascendancy of the one over the other, that we can find the explanation of moral action, good or bad, but in the essential character of the will itself. It is there, if anywhere, and not in the predominance of the sensuous over the spiritual nature, that the solution of the problem of evil is to be sought for.

Whether a completely satisfactory explanation of the nature and origin of evil is to be found here, in the nature of the will itself, is a question which in the next lecture I shall try to answer. Meanwhile, let me remark that the practical result to which the theory we have been considering would logically lead is simply asceticism. If sense and sin be identical, if the existence of evil be traceable to the natural desires and passions, then

the sure and the only way to the extirpation of evil is to cut out the element of passion by the root, to mortify or expel from our nature those tendencies from which evil takes its rise. Deliver the spirit from the tyranny that represses its native energies, and moral freedom and goodness will be the result.

But, that asceticism furnishes no escape from sin, many considerations might be adduced to show. I will name only these two: first, that the quelling of the natural desires leaves the deeper source of sin still undisturbed, and, secondly, that not only is there no necessary antagonism between the natural desires and the moral and spiritual life, but, on the contrary, that in that life such desires have an important part to play.

As to the former, experience abundantly proves that the extinction or enfeeblement of the sensuous passions is not the extinction of evil. Advancing years, for example, in many instances at least, bring exemption from many of the temptations of the flesh. If sin sprang only from these, the dying out of sensuous passions would be equivalent to emancipation from sin. But who will say that the exhausted voluptuary has become moral? Amidst sights and scenes that formerly stirred the blood

and kindled the unhallowed fire of sensuous passion, no pulsation of animal desire may now stir in the veins of the man whose former life was one of unbridled carnal indulgence. But, not to speak of the fact that the suppression of passion on one side of our nature may only send it with concentrated impetuosity into other channels, and the ejection of one evil spirit only make room for seven others more evil than the first ; it is to be considered that escape from animal excess is not, in any such case, the sign of moral improvement, but simply of the removal of the means of indulgence. The aged reprobate's comparative purity is of no more worth than the pauperized spendthrift's emancipation from extravagance, or the innocuousness of the beast of prey when its fangs have been drawn. If, again, we take the case of the voluntary ascetic, the man whose temperateness is the result, not of decaying powers, but of self-mortification, though his abstinence is of a better sort than that of the effete voluptuary, it is of the character not of true morality, but, in its essence, of moral cowardice. To fly from the foe we fear is not to conquer him. To overcome temptation by facing it manfully, and, in the strength of a higher and nobler impulse, to defy its power to overcome us, is one thing ; but

to escape the moral conflict which is the essential condition of virtue, by, so to speak, drugging or poisoning the enemy, is another, and, surely, an ignoble way of deliverance.

And, in the second place, there is this further consideration, that in the moral life what we call the lower, the bodily and sensuous side of our nature, has still an important and indispensable part to play. It is not necessarily antagonistic, but may become, and is intended to become, ministrant to the true activity and life of the spirit. It is a false spiritualism that denies the legitimate use of sense and of those natural tendencies, which are part and parcel of the nature God has given to us. "I beseech you," writes a Christian apostle, "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." And again, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless." "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" Such words as these suggest to us that, though regarded and pursued as an end in itself, sensuous satisfaction is ignoble and vile, yet that the natural desires and tendencies, when subordinated to the higher nature and its ends, may become, not merely innocent, but essential elements

in the moral and spiritual life. The bodily nature of man, its organs of sensation, its nervous system, its susceptibilities of pleasure and pain, its appetites and desires, its relations to its material environment, and so on, is in itself neither good nor evil; but, as the instrument and organ of the spirit, it furnishes the materials which, subjected to the transforming power of the higher nature, become the sources of ideas, feelings, volitions, of all that constitutes the substance of our intellectual and moral life.

It is through the channel of sense that our whole knowledge of nature comes, and all scientific knowledge, in one point of view, is only transformed and elaborated sensation. The glory and splendour of the visible creation, again, the whole range of the aesthetic emotions which are awakened in us in communion with nature by "the light of setting suns and the round ocean and the living air"—all that thrills us by its beauty or subdues us by its sublimity and grandeur, is but the working up, in the secret laboratory of mind, of materials which the bodily senses supply. It is through the avenue of sense that the spirit, otherwise shut up in the dark and narrow prison of its unconscious being, escapes from it to become, so to speak, free of the

vast realm of space, with its unnumbered suns and stars and systems.

And the same thing is true of our moral life. A will without particular desires and passions to be either gratified or subdued and made subservient to it, would be only the blank form of moral life without any positive content or the means of attaining it. The moral life, though infinitely more and higher than the natural, presupposes relations created by the natural desires, and rising out of them as its material basis. To live a human life at all, is to live a life of natural wants, and of relations which are possible only through the mediation of natural appetites and desires. The family union, through which the individual first realizes himself as capable of a life beyond himself in the life of others, has its external basis in appetites that are in themselves purely physical. But as the artist transforms mere blocks of stone or material pigments into the fair creations of genius; or as the vital energy of the plant transmutes into flower and fruit the grossness and foulness of the soil from which it springs and of the nutriment on which it feeds, so the life of the spirit transforms carnal appetite and passion into the pure affections, the love, tenderness, pity, com-

passion, the self-devotion, patriotism, philanthropy, that constitute the web and woof of our higher social existence. It is impossible, therefore, to identify sin with sense or to seek escape from it simply by the crushing or excision of sensuous desires and passions. The moral life is not a passionless life. Often the noblest moral natures, the men who have played the greatest part in the drama of human history, its heroes, patriots, philanthropists, reformers, martyrs, have been men of keen and quick natural susceptibilities, men whose very greatness has been due, in part at least, to this, that the element of feeling and passion, the pulse of natural human emotion, beat with intense activity within them. But it was not mere passion that made them great, but rather this—that moral principle, the inherent energy of a will set on higher and nobler ends, curbed the blind impulsiveness of passion, and by using up its impetuous natural force in the service of God and man, not only deprived it of all grossness and sordidness, but spiritualized and ennobled it.

LECTURE XI.

THEORIES AS TO THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF EVIL.

4. THE THEORY OF FREE WILL.

IN asserting that the ultimate source of moral action, whether good or evil, is to be sought for in the will itself, do we not expose ourselves to all the objections that have been urged against "indeterminism," or that "freedom of indifference" which plays so large a part in ethical controversy? When we speak of the will as having an inherent independence of outward conditions, and a power of identifying itself with any one of the contending desires which solicit it, is not this to ascribe to it precisely that capacity of unmotivated action which is meant by the phrase "liberty of indifference," the untenableness of which has been already pointed out? The main objection to any such freedom is, that in attempting to account for moral action

it makes moral action impossible, that it destroys responsibility in seeking to defend it.

Absolute freedom, indeed, it is maintained by its advocates, is the necessary condition of responsibility. If there be any influences, outward or inward, which determine the will independently of its own free activity, then for such action we are not accountable; neither merit nor demerit can be ascribed to it, it has no moral character whatever. To give it that character, the will must possess as its inherent prerogative an absolutely unbiassed power, in the presence of all solicitations, good or evil, of deciding between them and determining its own action. But the obvious answer of those who reject any such indeterminate freedom is, that from a will that is by its inherent nature in absolute equilibrium between good and evil, no action, or only action which is a matter of pure accident, could emanate.

To render the decision of a judge or umpire of any value, he must, indeed, start from a position of absolute impartiality or freedom from outward influence, but not from a position of impartiality to reason and justice. In all cases his decision will involve an act of will, but not of purely formal or empty will. If he be a good judge,

it will be the expression of a will imbued with a predisposition to truth and reason, and which, therefore, is intensely biassed towards the claims of the litigant who has truth and reason on his side. If he be a corrupt judge, he will be predisposed to determine in favour of the side with which his own interest is implicated. In neither case can his decision emanate from a will that is free, in the sense of being without character or content. If it were, if the mind of a judge were so constituted as to be absolutely indifferent to argument and appeal, and to retain in it a capacity of deciding for no reason but that he chose or willed so to decide, then the decision would be simply meaningless and irrational; it would be the expression neither of wisdom nor unwisdom, of probity or improbity, but simply of chance or accident. For a mind so constructed any laborious leading and sifting of evidence would be superfluous, and the case might with equal propriety be decided by a throw of the dice.

In like manner, in moral action, absolute liberty of indifference, as it has been called, so far from accounting for good or evil, would be equivalent to absolute irresponsibility. The moral value of any action or course of action depends on the character

of the mind and will from which it proceeds, and if that be absolutely characterless and contentless, equally characterless, equally devoid of significance, must be its activity. To base moral accountability on such a freedom is, as has been said, to make a man accountable for his actions simply because neither he nor anybody else can account for them. On the other hand, what gives to actions their moral character is the moral character of the will that expresses itself in them. The will of a man is nothing else than the self of a man or the man himself; and so far from being in any case absolutely colourless and indeterminate, it is that of which his whole life is the outcome. He is, therefore, free or self-determined, simply because his life and actions are the expression or realization of himself.

What light do these considerations throw on the problem before us? If it is not in the predominance of the sensuous desires over the will, but in the will itself, that the source or seat of sin is to be found, can we discern in the nature of the will anything to explain what sin is and how it arises in the moral history of man?

The answer to this question, stated very generally, is this, that in a spiritual self-conscious being, the

will is the capacity of realizing the true ideal or end of his nature; and that the good will is that which finds its satisfaction in seeking this end, the bad will that which finds its satisfaction in lower ends; in briefer terms, that goodness is true, badness false or perverted, self-realization. Or we might, from a different point of view, express the same thing by saying that, for a being made in the image of God, sin is selfishness, goodness self-realization through absolute self-surrender to God. But to make this account of the matter intelligible, there are several points which require special consideration.

1. In representing self-realization as the supreme end of life, do we not seem to be reducing goodness to a kind of selfishness? Do we not run counter to all the arguments for what is termed the "disinterested" nature of virtue, and to the universal instinct which makes, not self-seeking but self-sacrifice the highest kind of goodness, and sees in the self-devotion of the hero, the self-abnegation of the saint or martyr, that which is worthiest of honour and admiration? Moreover, do we not, in making self-realization the aim of action, contradict what has become a moral commonplace—that the self-seeker frustrates his own efforts, and that the

purest happiness, as well as the highest nobility of nature, is to be attained only by forgetting ourselves and our own interests in devotion to some worthy object or end?

The answer to this objection lies in the distinction between self-realization and selfishness. Rightly viewed these two things are not only different, but diametrically opposed, to each other. It is from overlooking this distinction that a certain school of moralists have maintained the doctrine of universal selfishness. They rest this doctrine on the obvious truism that in every human action the agent does what it pleases him to do. That we choose or will to do a thing, is only another way of saying that we like to do it, or that, all things considered, it is the thing most agreeable to us. No doubt we do many things which are painful and disagreeable, and which therefore involve self-denial; but in every such case the fact that we actually perform the painful act implies that, notwithstanding the pain, we find satisfaction in doing it, and that this satisfaction is more potent than the pain. A nauseous potion cannot be otherwise than unpleasant, but the satisfaction of doing what contributes to health is greater than the dissatisfaction of doing what is physically repulsive. Toil

and suffering, undertaken for those whom we love, are not, and cannot be, in themselves pleasurable ; but the pleasure of gratified affection overcomes and absorbs the pain of self-denial. The hard, joyless life of the philanthropist, the self-mortification of the devotee, the sacrifices of the hero, patriot, martyr, even if they do not go so far as the supreme sacrifice of life itself, cannot in themselves be other than painful to flesh and blood ; but here, again, there is a pleasure which transcends pain, a final, overlapping satisfaction, the intensity of which is measured, but not annulled, by the suffering through which it is won. If, however, an element of pleasure enter essentially into all human motives, and if even self-sacrifice be only a covert self-enjoyment, it is maintained that the doctrine of universal selfishness is incontrovertibly established.

But, as I have said, the plausibility of this argument arises from overlooking the distinction between self-realization and selfishness. It is possible to make our own pleasure the end of our actions, but we are not necessarily seeking our own pleasure because we seek what pleases us. Pleasure comes with satisfied desire, but there must be an object desired before there can be any pleasure in obtaining it. There must be something in the

very essence of our nature which fulfils itself in the desired object, and which shows itself in the pleasure that follows that fulfilment. The pleasure of eating does not create hunger, and could not exist if the hunger were not first there to be satisfied. There is pleasure in gratified affection, but we must love first before we can experience the joy of loving; there must be that in our nature which calls forth or fulfils itself in loving acts, before and in order that the pleasure of gratified affection may be felt; and it is not the pleasure that is our motive in loving, but the love itself. In other words, there must be something in fulfilled love which is for us an ideal end, in and for itself; and it is this, and not the ulterior pleasure which it brings, that is the motive of our action.

Thus in pure love and the actions to which it prompts, there is self-realization, but there is no taint of selfishness. And, in general, it is to be remarked that the pleasure or satisfaction which attends our actions, so far from reducing all actions alike to the common category of selfishness, is just that which gives to good, as distinguished from bad, actions their characteristic quality. We might even say, without incurring much suspicion of paradox, that to be pleased in doing evil is that which makes

it evil, to be pleased in doing good that which makes it good. No purer philanthropy can be conceived than the identification of our own happiness with the good of others, no deeper malignity than the identification of our own happiness with their suffering or degradation. If the pleasure we feel in doing good made our acts selfish, then what would make them unselfish would be to take no pleasure, or even to be pained, in doing good.

Further, the reference to self, the self-satisfaction on which the theory of universal selfishness is based, is simply that which makes any act the act of a rational or self-conscious being—which makes it possible to say, this act is *my* act. Without the “my,” and that which it involves, the basest or noblest act swims in the air, or sinks into the blind instinctive act of an animal. In every good or bad feeling or action, there must be a consciousness of self, as well as of the object aimed at. It is because the subject realizes or himself fulfils therein, that the act, in either case, becomes that of an intelligent and responsible agent. What is common to both acts is self-realization; what constitutes the difference of the two is the *kind* of acts by which the agent seeks to realize himself; or rather, as we shall immedi-

ately see, in the one kind there is true, in the other only spurious, self-realization ; in other words, in the good act it is the true, in the bad the false, self that is realized.

2. If, then, there is a sense in which self-realization is common to all kinds of human action, how, the question now arises, can we make self-realization the peculiar characteristic of good actions as distinguished from evil? The answer is involved in what was said in a former lecture on the nature of man, as that of a being made in the image of God. It is the universal, and not the merely individual self, that we must seek to realize. Not, indeed, that all acts directed toward the welfare and happiness of the individual, as such, are to be condemned as selfish. If the supreme motive be right, then the self-development and self-culture, intellectual and even physical, which makes the individual a better and more effective instrument for the accomplishment of that end, is not only innocent, but partakes of the nobleness of the end to which it points. It is quite true that the feeblest intelligence, the lowliest and most insignificant work, the unambitious career of the poorest day-labourer or domestic drudge, may be dignified and ennobled by the spirit of love and duty which governs it.

“Who sweeps a room as for God’s law, makes that and the action fine.” But it is also true that, other things being equal, vigorous bodily health, a cultured intelligence, a mind stored with rich and varied knowledge, the trained and disciplined powers of the statesman, the genius of the poet or artist or orator,—all these things make men capable of rendering larger services to society, and of laying more splendid sacrifices on the altar of religion. If it were possible for a man to reach the ideal perfection of his physical and intellectual nature, so that no member or organ of the body, no activity of the mind should be left undeveloped, but each in its own order should be disciplined, informed, cultured to its maximum of power, and all should be combined to produce the result of a richly dowered, symmetrically formed, beautiful individuality—who can doubt that such a man would have in him the greatest capacities of service for God and man; and who can hesitate to say that such self-culture, instead of being selfish, is the highest duty of every human soul?

But if we ask, in general, what is that kind of self-realization which is the characteristic of good actions as distinguished from bad, the answer is, as I have said, that the true self of man—that self,

the realization of which constitutes the ideal perfection of his nature—is not the private, particular self of this or that individual, but the universal, and in a sense infinite self, which is implied in the phrase “made in the image of God.” It is, indeed, only by a false abstraction that we can ascribe any reality to the former apart from the latter. To be absolutely selfish, shut up in any particular isolated individuality, is, strictly speaking, an impossibility. Good or bad, the individual cannot help breaking down the limit that would shut him up from all other beings, as an isolated atom in God’s universe. The life of society flows into us and becomes a part of us whether we will or no. Eliminate all in a man’s nature that involves relationship to nature and society, all the feelings, ideas, experiences, which come to the birth through the social medium wherein he is embedded, and the result would be, not a human being, but a maimed and lifeless abstraction. But the real universality of our nature is not that which forces itself upon us, and, whether we will or no, breaks down the barrier between the private, empirical self and the world. Our social relations are part of our consciousness of ourselves. The self-conscious subject can realize itself only by emerging from its separate

life, and surrendering itself to that which it has only in unity with others, in identification of itself with the larger, other life of the spiritual world around us—the life of the family, the community, the nation, the race, and finally with that infinite life which is ever revealing and realizing itself in the world as a whole. Love, patriotism, philanthropy, religion, are terms which, in condensed form, express the capacity in man of passing out of the narrow limits of the individual self, of realizing himself in an ever-expanding objective world which is his other and larger self, till the process culminates in the identification of thought, feeling, volition, action, of our very soul and being, with the thought and life of Him, of whom all other life is only the partial and imperfect manifestation.

It is not, indeed, implied in what has now been said—it would, indeed, be a contradiction in terms to suppose—that self-realization, so defined, involves the swamping of the individual, personal self in the organic life of the world, or in the life of the Infinite. Such absorption would be, not self-realization, but self-extinction. As has been already pointed out, in saying that your life is my life, the “my” remains, and can never without self-contradiction be obliterated. The

other, in and for whom I live, is not simply another, but *my* other, the other or objective self in which I find myself, or which reveals myself to me. It is still I, who become richer, fuller of life by all I give away. The life I give returns upon itself in a life "more abundant," and that is deepened and intensified in proportion to the largeness of the circle of objects it embraces. And if we say that religion is the absolute surrender of the soul to God, the surrender derives its meaning and value from this, that it is a conscious self-surrender—that it is not the meaningless rapture of the mystic striving after an impossible self-annihilation, but the "joy in God" of the spirit which, in the inmost depths of its being, thrills with the consciousness of unimpeded union with the life of the Infinite. Of this self-realization the nearest, though still only imperfect, type, is that so often referred to in the New Testament, the relation of the member of a living organism to the other members and to the whole. For, whilst the member of the living body realizes itself, has its perfection, not in any isolated individuality, but in absolute surrender to the well-being of the other members, in the maintenance of a perpetual process of giving and receiving,

and in the common and continuous contribution of each and all to the life and growth of the organic whole ; yet each member has, and retains to the last, an individuality which, though indivisible, is yet not indistinguishable from the rest. Only in this is the type an inadequate or merely approximate one, that in that vast living organism in which finite souls are one with each other and with God, there is present an element which is lacking to all natural organisms, in virtue of which every member *knows* and *wills* itself and its relation to the rest, and is a conscious participant in the universal life to which all the members, each in its own place and function, contribute.

3. What, then, is the bearing of these considerations on the problem before us—the nature of moral evil or sin? It is obviously only in the light of the true ideal of any nature, that we can find the explanation of that which contradicts or frustrates it. It is not therefore simply in the satisfaction of the natural impulses and passions that the explanation of sin is to be found ; for if man were a creature of mere impulse, his actions would be as irresponsible, and the satisfaction of his impulses as innocent or devoid of moral

significance, as they are in the lower animals. But in the lowest degradation to which a spiritual nature can descend, that which we have called his essential infinitude still remains; and it is its presence, with all its boundless potentialities, that gives the character of evil to a life spent in the satisfaction of merely natural propensities. It is not in the satisfaction of natural desires, but in the fact that it is an infinite nature that is seeking satisfaction in them, that the essence of sin lies.

The question, therefore, on which the moral character of a self-conscious being turns, is not whether the infinite, inalienable element in him shall seek satisfaction, for it can never in one sense cease to do so; but whether it shall seek satisfaction in objects that are commensurate with it—in the universal ends, which we express by such phrases as the good of mankind and the glory of God, or in a life of purely self-centred enjoyment. The moral choice does not lie between the satisfaction of the higher and the satisfaction of the lower nature; for in all actions, whether good or bad, the higher nature is present and operative; but what lends to every vicious and sinful act, or to an immoral and evil life, its distinctive

character, is that the whole force of the higher or universal nature is diverted from its proper end to objects that are inadequate to it, objects in which it can never find satisfaction. The desires of the animal and sensuous nature are in themselves innocent; and even the more ideal desires which, though not sensuous, are purely selfish—if they could be conceived to exist apart from self-consciousness—would deserve no moral condemnation. But the misery and shame they involve lie in the fact that it is the higher nature, with all its boundless capabilities, that is striving to satisfy itself in them, and clothing their objects with an illusory worth and magnitude. To feed on the husks of sensuous and selfish pleasure is not evil for the mere animal, but it is evil, it is self-degradation for man, because it is the infinite hunger of a spirit that he is attempting to satisfy with them. And, let me add, we have here, too, the explanation of that disproportionate intensity which often characterizes the selfish vices. We may moralize, for instance, on the folly of ambition, on the illusoriness of that quenchless love of power which to the very verge of the grave will sometimes glow with an exhaustless ardour for new worlds to conquer, in the breast of the man who

is soon and inevitably to quit the scene of all his triumphs. The solution is, that it is the very grandeur of a noble nature, its capacity for an infinite satisfaction and blessedness, that reveals itself in the misdirected, ruinous, inextinguishable intensity of the love of earthly greatness.¹

On the other hand, our conception of the nature of sin would be incomplete, if we did not view it as involving a wrong done to the lower, as well as to the higher nature of man. For whilst it is the dishonour and degradation of the spirit to seek satisfaction in the flesh, it is equally the dishonour of the flesh to become, not the organ, but the end of the spirit. In the practical, as in the intellectual life, it is, as we saw in the last lecture, the glory of nature to become the organ of spirit. The sensitive nature fulfils its true and proper function when, in the process of knowledge, the organs of sense become the media, through which the raw material of sensations and impressions are subjected to the transforming touch of intelligence, and are wrought up into perceptions, ideas, and the ordered unity of thought; or again, when, in the sphere of imagination, sensations of light and sound and touch are transmuted into the rhyth-

Cf. *University Sermons*, p. 58 seq.

mical harmonies of music and the beautiful forms of art.

So, in like manner, the natural desires and impulses fulfil their proper function, when they cease merely to minister to pleasurable feeling and become transformed into the organs of spirit, the means by which the self-conscious, self-determining spirit seeks its own higher satisfaction, puts the stamp of its own activity on the outward world, and reaches forward to the fulfilment of its own universal ends. The natural desires are potentially spiritual, implicitly related, as ministers and agents, to ends that are beyond themselves ; and, therefore, when they are perverted from means into ends, when the universal nature tries to extract an impossible satisfaction out of them, a function is imposed upon them for which they are altogether inadequate. A false strain, so to speak, is put upon them, which is destructive of their healthy action, and which shows itself sooner or later in exhaustion and arrested activity. Not only by physical disease, but by the drying up of the pleasures of sense and the deadening of the desires from which an impossible satisfaction is sought to be extracted, it is proved that a life of sensuous indulgence involves, not merely the degradation of the spirit,

but the disorder and destruction of the organs by which it operates. So, in general, the man who makes the satisfaction of his individual self his sole end and aim, wrongs not only his higher nature, but that very individual nature which he seeks to satisfy. For here, as in all organic life, the individual member or organ has no independent or exclusive life, and the attempt to attain to it is fatal to itself. In the social organism, the individual who makes himself his own end, who runs his whole energies into the satisfaction of his own exclusive pleasures and interests, is his own worst enemy. He starves his individual nature of all that wealth of thought, feeling, energy, enjoyment, which would flow into it from its social relations and the fulfilment of its social duties. In estrangement from the progressive life of society and from that infinite life which is realizing itself therein, the nature of the individual becomes dwarfed and dwindled. For, as we have often seen, it is the irrevocable law of our being that we must die to self in order truly to gain ourselves. Only in the absolute surrender of ourselves and our private and particular interests, in devotion to duty and to God, do we find the fulfilment of the true nature and life of our individual selves. For so

surrendered, the individual self is not lost or annihilated, nor is one capacity of its being extinguished, but its natural powers and activities, each and all, come back upon it quickened, enriched, expanded by the spiritual principle that controls and transforms them.

LECTURE XII.

THE POSSIBILITY OF MORAL RESTORATION.

So far, we have been considering the nature and origin of moral evil. We must now proceed to consider the possibility of its cure or extinction, of the partial or complete victory of good over it. Is moral evil irremediable, or, if not, is moral recovery possible in the way of self-reformation, or only through external, supernatural interposition? If the latter alternative be the truth, is the moral impotence which sin produces absolute and complete, or only partial? Is it of the nature of sin so to paralyze the spiritual energies, that the soul must passively wait for and submit itself to the power that interposes for its recovery, or can it do anything to bring that power into operation and co-operate with it in the process of its own restoration?

These are questions around which theological

controversy has raged for centuries, and the solution of which, in the view of many, is still as far off as ever. It will be necessary to refer to these controversies in subsequent lectures, but meantime it may here be observed that the doctrine of human depravity has often, both by individual thinkers and by schools of theology, been so presented as to become self-contradictory. As a thorough-going scepticism, so a thorough-going pessimism, refutes itself. The sceptic presupposes a standard of knowledge by reference to which he pronounces all knowledge to be futile, and tacitly assumes the competence of human intelligence in the very act of denying it. In like manner, the assertor of the "total depravity" of human nature, of its absolute moral blindness and incapacity, presupposes in himself and others the presence of a criterion or principle of good, in virtue of which he discerns himself to be wholly evil; yet the very proposition that human nature is wholly evil, would be unintelligible unless it were false.

Moreover, the notion of absolute or total depravity would imply, not only the unconsciousness of its existence, but the impossibility of moral recovery; and, conversely, the consciousness of sin implies that it is not absolute, and that a spiritual

nature, so long as it does not cease to *be* spiritual, contains in it at least so much of good as to constitute the possibility of its moral restoration. Neither from within nor from without, by its own or by any external power, could the process of moral recovery be initiated in a nature in which evil had become absolute. Not from within, for absolute depravity is only another name for moral impotence; it means that the very conception of a good to which aspiration might be directed has vanished; in other words, that the nature is one for which moral distinctions no longer exist, which has sunk from being spiritual into being purely animal, and which can no more raise itself out of its degradation than an animal can transform itself into an intelligent agent. Nor, on this supposition, could the process of recovery be effected from without, or by any external, supernatural agency. For the external agency, however powerful, would have no material on which to operate. Restoration is possible in the case of a diseased organism, but not in one in which life is extinct. The restoration to moral and spiritual vitality of a nature wholly depraved, would not be really the restoration of that which was depraved or devitalized, but the creation of a new moral agent: not the making of a bad

man good, but the transforming of an animal, or of something lower than an animal, into a man.

Again, if, as I tried to show in a former lecture, goodness or moral character is from its very nature a thing which cannot be directly and immediately created, neither can it be restored even by an Omnipotent power. Moral qualities cannot, like physical, be gifts of nature or of any purely external benefactor; they involve, in the very idea of them, the self-determined activity of the agent. The activity by which they are produced must be our own and not another's. Our natural gifts and endowments, so long as they are merely *given*, are of no more moral value than the beauty of a flower or the speed and sagacity of an animal. Our natural desires and tendencies are only the materials out of which moral character can be formed; and to lend moral value to the result, it must be achieved by self-conscious choice, by self-discipline and self-determination. If we could conceive of a goodness created or restored by an external power apart from the activity of the subject, such goodness would in reality belong, not to the subject, but to the power that operated on it. But, in that case, it must be added, that the Being, who simply by an act of power could turn evil into good, must be

held responsible, not only for neglecting to extirpate evil and transform the whole universe of moral being into perfect goodness, but also for not, by a similar act of power, preventing the very entrance of evil into the world.

Again, not only does absolute depravity, and the unconsciousness of evil involved in it, render the notion of moral restoration impossible, but, on the other hand, as I have said, the consciousness of evil implies that the evil is not absolute, but carries with it the possibility of moral restoration. The misery and dissatisfaction of an evil life, the self-reproach and shame which, so long as the subject does not cease to be human, can never be wholly extinguished in it, are not indeed in themselves the signs of moral recovery; but they are the indication of a nature the essence of which is on the side of goodness, and the silent proof that recovery is still possible. There is a sense in which even in sin, in a life abandoned to sensual or selfish indulgence, there is to be discerned an indication of the latent presence of that which is the principle of all goodness. What vicious self-seeking means, as we have already seen, is that the universal self which, in a self-conscious nature, lies behind all particular desires and impulses, is vainly

trying to find its satisfaction in them : that the spirit made in the image of God is setting itself to the impossible quest for satisfaction in the pleasures of the animal. And that this is so, is shown partly by the disproportionate avidity and eagerness with which sensuous and selfish satisfactions are sought after, but mainly by the reaction of discontent, restlessness, disappointment, which attends each particular gratification, and by the self-contempt and remorse which are the ultimate issue of a life of such self-indulgence.

But whilst the consciousness of sin is a negative sign of the possibility of moral restoration, it does not seem to be in itself a proof that that possibility will become actuality. The dissatisfaction and self-reproach which attend a selfish life, witness to the presence in the spirit of a latent ideal which is denied and frustrated ; but it may remain nothing more than a latent ideal. It may be sufficient to condemn, without producing any, or any but the faintest, stimulus to its own realization. The impulse to self-reformation which arises simply from shame, remorse, self-reproach, unless reinforced by something infinitely more potent, will be easily overborne by outward temptation, and must ever prove inadequate to the conquest of selfish desires and the restoration of the soul to goodness.

How, then, is this restoration to be effected? Is there any conceivable means by which the possibility involved in the consciousness of sin can be turned into a reality,—by which selfish passions can be disarmed of their power, and brought into subjection to that higher and better self which has in it the principle of a divine or infinite life?

The answer to this question is contained in the personality and life of Christ and in the Christian doctrines of Redemption and Grace; and that answer, and its accordance with the principles of reason and the moral and spiritual needs of man, will form the subjects of the following lectures. But, meantime, it may be possible, even at this stage of our inquiry, to see by anticipation what direction the inquiry must take. From the view which has been given of the nature of the disease, we may discern in some measure what the remedy must be capable of achieving, and so be prepared to perceive the adequacy of that remedy which, as unfolded in the Christian religion, we believe to be “the power of God unto salvation.”

We have seen that the conflict between the higher and lower nature of man, of which moral character is the result, is, in the outset, waged on very unequal terms. From the very dawn of the

moral consciousness there are many influences which would seem to throw the balance on the side of evil. Many natural feelings and passions, many satisfactions which are immediate and certain, are on the one side; while, on the other side, moral principle is yet undeveloped, and the satisfactions which it promises are dim and distant, and attainable only by long and painful effort and self-discipline. And what is specially to be noticed is, that whilst the lower element has on its side all the immediate force of natural appetite, of spontaneous inclination and impulse, the higher comes to us at the first only in the form of an outward imperative or of deference to an arbitrary authority. The moral imperative is, indeed, the expression of our own deepest nature, and obedience to it may ultimately become obedience that has lost all sense of constraint, and that is identical with perfect freedom. But at the beginning of our moral history it is not so. Duty at the first presents itself to us in the form of commands and prohibitions which limit and repress nature, obedience to which may be enforced by outward sanctions, but runs counter to natural inclination. It is, in short, a law which we may be constrained to obey, but which we do not and cannot love.

And if this be so even at the outset, much more intense becomes the bias on the side of the lower self in the nature that has already become vitiated by yielding to it. For here the conflict becomes one between, on the one hand, desires and passions that have become intensified, and moral perceptions that have been obscured and weakened by evil compliance; and, on the other hand, a law which not only limits and represses but which also condemns us. How shall this balance be redressed? How shall the soul which is entangled in the meshes of evil inclination, and confronted by a law that speaks only with a voice of condemnation, and which, even if shame and remorse should awaken the longing for a better life, feels its endeavours to issue only in a painful sense of impotence and baffled effort—how under such conditions shall the soul achieve its escape from the fatal grasp of sin?

There is, indeed, one thing that would redress the unequal strife, and even give victorious energy to the side of duty. If evil inclination could be encountered by a larger, deeper love, reinforcing reason and conscience, then might moral emancipation be no longer hopeless. But the love that would disarm law of its sternness and quell the

power of the evil self, is not a thing which by any act of our own will we can compass. By an effort of will we may yield a hollow and painful outward obedience to a law that condemns us. Compunction and remorse, slavish fear and selfish interest, have often made men outwardly moral, or induced them to submit to penances and painful austerities, in order to atone for an evil past. But if there be nothing in the law of right that calls forth our sympathy or kindles our admiration, if the emotion, which would render the conflict between duty and inclination no longer an unequal one, spring not up unprompted in the heart, then by no effort of will, though it were to save the soul from perdition, can we force it to arise.

Now, it is this problem of the spiritual life which finds its solution in the Christian religion, and especially in the person and life of Christ. Christianity supplies that new motive force which renders the moral conflict no longer unequal; and it does so by presenting that infinite right to which reason and conscience point, no longer as a mere external authoritative law which at once condemns and repels us, but in a form in which it awakens and reciprocates our love. In other words, the law of eternal right ceases to present the aspect

of an abstract, impersonal authority, and becomes transformed into a personality that is capable of loving and being loved.

Christianity, in the first place, presents to us the moral ideal in a form which calls forth all the ardour and intensity of the personal affections. Christianity, indeed, does not supersede the moral ideal, the conception of right as a principle of rational intelligence ; on the contrary, it immeasurably elevates and expands that ideal, and so, in one way, renders its realization more difficult, its non-attainment a source of deeper humiliation. But, on the other hand, it lends to moral effort the wonderful accession of power, the warmth and intensity, the sweetness and joy, which are possible only in our relations to a living personality. In the person and life of Christ the moral ideal, so to speak, takes visible form and embodiment ; truth, goodness, purity, righteousness, present themselves to us, not as abstract ideas or unrealized qualities, but in the living, breathing characteristics of a concrete personality, for whom we can feel—what the former can never create—the admiration, reverence, love, of a personal devotion. Whilst thus the eternal law of right loses in Christian morality nothing of its imperativeness, it gains a new and in-

calculable power over the deeper springs of human action. Not, indeed, that in introducing the personal element into our moral conceptions, Christianity is to be regarded as substituting the authority of an individual will for the universal authority of the moral law ; but that the universal ideas of the moral law, in becoming incarnate in the self-consciousness of a living personality, whilst they retain all their absoluteness and imperativeness, add to these the subtler, more constraining power that pertains to their embodiment in a Being who can touch our hearts, captivate our affections, and bind us to Himself by the tie of a profound yet passionate self-surrender.

But, in the second place, Christianity identifies the moral ideal, not only with a Being whom we can love, but with a Being who loves us. So long as the moral imperative reveals itself to our reason and conscience simply as an ideal principle or law, its power over the human spirit is inadequate to the control of the desires and passions of the lower nature, and still more to the emancipation of the will that has already long abandoned itself to their sway. And this inadequacy arises from the fact, not only that it cannot call forth the personal affections, but that it cannot respond to

them. We may personify law or duty, but it is only by a flight of imagination that we can say of it :

. . . "Thou dost wear,
The Godhead's most benignant grace ;
Nor is there anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face."

For law has no personality, no face to smile upon us, no consciousness to recognize our devotion or reciprocate our love.

Above all, so long as the moral ideal is that of impersonal law, it is absolutely devoid of that profound remedial influence which is involved in the notion of forgiveness—of sorrow as well as condemnation for the guilty, of self-sacrificing love for the penitent. For, so long as the moral imperative is conceived of apart from those qualities which belong to personality and self-consciousness, its relation to the transgressor is that of unalterable, irreconcilable condemnation, of a principle according to which the sequence of sin and penalty, of moral evil and its penal results, is one that can never be broken or redressed. The moral order of the universe, under this conception, is one in which the connection of cause and effect is as uniform and rigid and inviolable

as the physical ; and every event in it is woven into a concatenation or system, in which the disturbance of a single link would imply the subversion of the whole, and in which human exigencies can no more arrest the prescribed and changeless course of things than they can arrest the force of gravitation, or the ebb and flow of the tide, or the destructive energy of the tempest or the volcano. It is one of the commonest of moral truisms that the penalty of sin does not consist of arbitrary or external inflictions, but arises out of the law that we ourselves are the result of our own past, and that we can no more evade or undo these results than we can turn back the wheel of time and make the past never to have been. In so far as the penalty of sin can be said to be external and physical, it actually belongs to, and partakes of, the changeless necessity of nature. No penitence, no agony of shame or sorrow can bring back health to the intemperate man, or re-string the nerves which sensuality has disordered, or restore the vital energy which a course of vicious indulgence has wasted.

But the main penalty of sin lies in those inward and spiritual results which arise out of its very essence, and which would seem, so long as the

agent lives, to be as indestructible as the very substance of his self-consciousness. We are what we have done. The responsibility and guilt that pertained to us in each sinful act, pertains to us now, and can never be shaken off. Even though the memory of it may grow dim or be obliterated, it is ours and will for ever remain ours, all the same. Equally ineffaceable would seem to be the moral results of sin—the increasing proclivity to sensuous and selfish passion, the darkening of our moral perceptions, the deadening of our moral sympathies, the taint of falsehood, the corrosion of avarice, the hardening influence of lust, the loss of self-respect, of pure feeling and all nobility of nature—these and the like are consequences of sin which are related by an absolute necessity to their cause, and which, inasmuch as they sap the moral strength and undermine the freedom from which any endeavour after recovery could proceed, would seem to render moral recovery impossible.¹

Now what modification, let us ask, of this aspect of the moral ideal would be effected, if we could regard it, no longer as an unchangeable and

¹ Cf. in *University Sermons*, "Is repentance ever impossible?" p. 133 *seq.*

absolute law, but as embodied in a living self-conscious personality? It may, indeed, be said that we do not need Christ to enable us to reach this point of view; that we attain to it whenever we identify the principle of morality with the mind and will of a personal God. But to whatever idea of God speculative thought may be capable of attaining, God, as an object of religious knowledge, is for us the highest finite form in and through which the Infinite manifests or reveals Himself to us; and this highest manifestation of the Infinite Spirit is the finite spirit made in His own image. If, therefore, the moral ideal is to be identified in our thought with a living, self-conscious personality, it can only be with that of a perfect humanity, and, in the first instance at least, of a perfect individual human life.

Now, so presented to us, consider what transformation the moral ideal undergoes, and especially the remediable power over the fallen, sin-burdened spirit which it gains. For one thing, instead of unconscious, unbending necessity, the impersonal uniformity and unchangeable rigidity of law, the conception that rises before us is that of law become alive with thought and love, of eternal purity and righteousness knowing itself and us,

rejoicing in our obedience, condemning our moral aberrations, yet, while condemning, not ceasing to love us. What we have here is the absolute righteousness which law expresses, along with that which law cannot express—boundless love and pity for the transgressor; and both linked together in one beautiful human personality. Nay, more than that, instead of the conception of an impersonal principle which cannot be affected by pain or sorrow, there is here that of a being who can bear, with us and for us, the burden of our guilt, and who, in one sense, can endure for us a reflected shame and sorrow, infinitely more intense and poignant than our own. For, on the one hand, it is of the very nature of sin to dull or deaden our moral sensibilities, and so to blind us to its abhorrent nature; and, on the other hand, the recoil from sin, the wound it inflicts on the moral consciousness, grows with the elevation and purity of our nature, and would reach its point of keenest intensity in a moral nature absolutely pure and good. Conceive, therefore, such a being, the ideal of moral perfection incarnate in a human personality, and at the same time one who loves us with a love so absolute as to identify himself with us and to

make our good and evil his own—bring together these elements in a living, conscious, human spirit, and you have in it a capacity of shame and sorrow and anguish, a possibility of bearing the burden of human guilt and wretchedness which lost and sinful humanity can never bear for itself.

Now it is this combination which is presented to us in the personality and life of Christ. And it needs little reflection to perceive the remedial, quickening, redeeming power, the awakening, transforming influence over human hearts and lives which is contained in this aspect of our Christian faith. In the love of eternal purity incarnate for sin-burdened souls, lies the profoundest appeal to our moral nature and the secret of moral and spiritual restoration. Experience shows that even in ordinary human sympathy and love there is a strange power of moral healing. Even among the morally degraded and abandoned, where at first sight the problem of moral recovery might seem to be insoluble, there are, as experience shows, men and women who could never be reached by moral teaching, still less by denunciations, threatenings, penal terrors, in whose breast the spring of moral sensibility has been touched by the presence and power of self-sacrificing love.

And the reason, in part at least, is, that in such a presence there is a living witness to the truth, that past guilt is no bar to reconciliation with perfect goodness, and that the sin which has not exhausted or estranged us from human love, cannot lie beyond the range of the divine.

But there is a limit to the restorative power of human sympathy and forgiveness. In the case of all ordinary human benefactors the doubt may arise, whether man's clemency to man may not in some measure be due to human imperfection. It may be the expression of merely natural, instinctive affection. It may be the false tolerance that springs from imperfect moral perceptions, and an inadequate appreciation of the evil of sin. It may be the unconscious forbearance that shrinks from condemning in another, shortcomings and sins which are only an exaggerated reflexion of our own. At best, no ordinary human being has ever attained to such absolute, stainless purity and goodness, that his voice could be regarded as one with the voice of eternal truth and righteousness, his forgiveness of sin as identified with forgiveness from the absolute source and centre of right. In the awakened, self-condemning conscience the redeeming power of human sympathy may be arrested

by the thought, that man may forgive where God has not forgiven.

Now it is from this point of view that we can discern the moral need of humanity, and the adequacy of that provision which Christianity has made to meet it. The marvellous power which Christ exerted in His earthly life, and which through successive generations His Gospel has exerted over human hearts and lives, is due above all to this, that in Him the absolute righteousness we reverence, and the forgiveness we need, are blended in perfect unity in one actual, living personality. That our sins have not for ever separated us from God, that the infinite purity has not for ever hid its face from us, that the inviolable justice which condemns sin is only another aspect of the love that seeks the salvation of the sinner; or, conversely, that the love which no depth of moral degradation can exhaust, is one with the righteousness that is absolutely intolerant of evil—this is the great idea, of which Christianity not merely brings to us the authoritative announcement, but which in the person and life of Christ it sets before us as a living reality.

Lastly, I can only notice, without enlarging on it, this further thought, that in Christianity the moral ideal is revealed to us, not merely as an out-

ward object of love, but as an immanent Spirit and life. In the conflict with sin and the endeavour after goodness, Christ is something more for us than a beautiful historic personality ; He is an indwelling ever-present spirit, co-operating with us, animating and inspiring us, reinforcing our better nature, blending His thought with our thought, His will with our will, His life with our life.

It is no doubt true that we can say of the historic life of Christ, as of the life of all good men, that it has become an undying legacy to the world. There is that in the career of a noble and exalted personality which never dies, but constitutes a permanent contribution to the spiritual life of the race. And, in some respects, it may even be said that the influence of the world's saints and heroes, especially of those who by their genius or their self-devotion, their intellectual or moral greatness and originality, have introduced a new element into the progressive life of mankind, becomes more potent when in outward presence they have passed away from the world. The universal element that was in them becomes, so to speak, liberated by death from the accidents of the individual life. Even for the contemporaries of a great individuality, the idea of a

vanished life may be more vivid in its purely spiritual essence than in its actual presence. For it comes back upon them idealized and elevated, with a rounded completeness for thought which it had not for sense, with a subtle charm in which memory is more potent than sight. And, undoubtedly, even in this sense, it is pre-eminently true of Christ that the idea of His life has become a rich and permanent element in the spiritual life of the world. Measured merely by its traditional influence, no such life has ever been lived on earth: no other life has so triumphed over death, has gone on, as His has done, re-living itself through the ages, permeating with its hidden power the individual and social life, the institutions, the literature and art, the moral and spiritual history of mankind.

But the abiding presence which Christian thought ascribes to Christ is something more than this ideal perpetuity. The Spirit of Christ, the divine life that was in Him, is not a thing that belongs merely to the past. What we recognize as the constitutive essence of that life is, that it was the self-revelation of the Divine in the human, the Infinite in the finite—the absolute identification of the mind and will of God with the mind and will of man. And, so regarded, the

essence of the life of Christ is no more a thing of the past than the being and life of God is a thing of the past, or of any particular time or place. It is rather that eternal life which is for ever realizing itself in the spirit and life of humanity. The infinite spirit and power that identified itself with the finite and human in the person and life of Christ, has been revealing and realizing itself in the whole course of history, identifying itself with the finite and human as the indwelling principle of the thought and life of every individual Christian soul, penetrating all the social relations of communities and nations, and inspiring the corporate unity of the Christian Church; and it is still finding its ever growing manifestation in that progressive spirit and life of humanity, that ever advancing life of truth and goodness which, never hasting, never resting, is, we believe, under all the transient and ever changing aspects of human things, moving onwards to its consummation. The eye that looks on to the surface of things may fail to see it, the ear that is dulled or deadened by the tumult of human passion may fail to hear the heavenly voice; but it is here, never far from any one of us, a divine element surrounding us when we know and think not of it, a divine light rippling round blind eyes,

a heavenly music seeking entrance into deaf ears ; and nothing but our own moral opacity and dullness hinders it from penetrating, suffusing, identifying itself with our own very life and being.

Men sometimes speak as if our belief in Christ were a thing that stands or falls with the proof of the authenticity of ancient documents, and the demonstrated historic accuracy of the extant records of Christ's earthly life. In their main substance these records have, indeed, stood the test of criticism ; but our faith in the Christ they reveal rests, I believe, on a more impregnable foundation than historic tradition—even on the inward witness of a spiritual presence here and now, which we can realize more profoundly than when men looked on the face and listened to the voice of Jesus of Nazareth—the inward witness to the presence of that redeeming, purifying, hallowing Spirit that was incarnate in Him, and that is still and for ever living not only *for* us, but *in* us, and in all who open their spirits to its life-giving power.

How do we know that the principle of life in nature, the germinating, animating force and energy, belongs not to any past age, has never departed from the world ? We know it, because every successive spring we witness the annual miracle of

nature's revival, every summer and autumn the waving corn clothing the fields with fertility, and the leafy woods ringing with the sounds of multitudinous life. How do we know as we read the works of the master minds, the great poets and artists of the past, that the spirit that inspired them is not a thing that pertained to a dim and distant age, or was limited to the compass of a few brief and glorious lives? We know it, because in communion with them we feel it. By the inner response which the undying products of their genius awaken in our minds, by the thoughts, emotions, aspirations which at their touch leap to life within us,—by these experiences we have the assurance that the spirit that was in them is not a transient visitant, but a perennial presence and power in the thought and life of the world.

And so, in a far higher sphere, we may know by a like witness that the spirit that was in Christ and that made all that one human life resplendent with the glory of the infinite and eternal, has not passed, will never pass away from the world. We need not go up to heaven to bring Christ down from above, or back to a dim and vanished age with painful research, to revive a fading image of the past. He is near

us, here and now, the light of all our seeing, the ever present, inexhaustible source and well-spring of spiritual life and strength and joy. In the living experience of every Christian spirit, if we but read it truly, there is the witness to the abiding presence of another and higher, raising it ever above itself, the irrefragable proof that that redeeming, hallowing, saving spirit, which for a few brief years identified itself with a perfect human personality, is not a thing of the past, but a living operating spirit and power, imparting to every soul that will but open itself to receive it, the strength, the purity, the peace of a life that is one with the very life of God.

LECTURE XIII.

THEORIES OF THE INCARNATION.

I. THEORIES THAT EXCLUDE OR MODIFY THE DIVINE ELEMENT IN THE NATURE OF CHRIST.

THE doctrine of the Incarnation, or of the unity of two natures, the divine and the human, in the person of Christ, has been often presented in a way which renders it barren of human interest, and devoid of any practical relation to our moral and spiritual life. It has been regarded, for instance, simply as one of those doctrines which lie beyond the scope of human intelligence, as a theological enigma or mystery, a doctrine, not indeed contrary to reason, but above reason ; yet which, as authoritatively revealed, must be received as an article of faith. If, again, reason has not felt itself absolutely precluded from attempting to construe to itself the conception of the union in a single personality of the seemingly contradictory predi-

cates, infinite and finite, divine and human, the person of Christ has been dealt with in the long course of theological controversy as a problem which by various logical expedients ecclesiastical writers have attempted to solve. Or, again, to name no other example, religious minds have not seldom found spiritual satisfaction in dismissing all attempts to regard the Incarnation in any other light than that of a divine plan or device to meet the exigencies of fallen humanity, a method devised by infinite wisdom for an end which nothing less than the interposition of a divine agent in human form could accomplish.

So far, however, from our being constrained to regard this doctrine, either as an absolute enigma, or as a theological puzzle for the exercise of the logical understanding, I think it may not be impossible for us to discern in it that which appeals in the profoundest manner to our spiritual intelligence, as the very fundamental principle of the Christian religion, and the supreme source of its moral and spiritual power. And if we can in any sense regard the Incarnation as a divine expedient to meet the moral necessities of a fallen and guilty race, I think we may be able to show that it meets them, not arbitrarily, but because—if we can term it an

expedient—it is one which is grounded in the very nature both of God and man, of the Infinite Spirit and the finite spirit which He has made in His own image. For, as I have indicated in a former lecture, there is a point of view from which the very idea of God may be seen to contain or involve that relation to humanity which is expressed in the person of Christ, and the human life of Christ to be the manifestation, under the form of time, of a principle which is contained eternally in the very essence of the divine nature. And on the other hand, there is a sense in which human nature contains in it, as a necessary element, that union with God or participation in the divine nature which finds its expression in the person and life of Christ. In briefer terms, there is a sense in which it may be said that God would not be God without union with man, and man would not be truly man without union with God.

Nor, again, is it necessary to assent to the view of those who regard the Incarnation as an abstract dogma having no direct bearing on our moral and spiritual life. On the contrary, it may be shown to be the source of our profoundest religious experience and the strength and support of our moral life. It lends a new

reality and intensity to our religious affections by bringing God within the range of our human sympathies. It enables us to see in Him, not the distant monarch of the universe, invested with the attributes of a metaphysical infinitude, betwixt whom and us there is the impassable barrier that separates natures absolutely heterogeneous, but rather a Being who not only transcends, but is immanent in the spirits He has made in His own image: whose infinitude does not render Him unconscious of finite limitations, nor His immutability of the weaknesses and imperfections, the pains and sorrows to which flesh is heir, and with whose nature it is no irreverence to associate the ideas of self-sacrifice, self-devotion—nay, even of a love to which the supreme manifestation of love, the sacrifice of life itself, is not impossible.

On the other hand, regarded as a revelation of human nature, the Incarnation may be said to have changed for us the whole aspect of our moral and spiritual life, not merely by setting before us an example of moral perfection, but by disclosing the presence of a divine or infinite element in our nature, by revealing to us underneath all the limiting conditions of humanity—its transiency and evanescence, its weaknesses and imperfections, even

its moral defilement and disability—an ideal glory and beauty, an essential affinity with the nature of God. By the voice of one who is at once Son of Man and Son of God, it calls the least and lowest, even the guiltiest and most degraded of mankind, to be sons of God, to be perfect as God is perfect, to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If, thus, Christianity has become the source of a new conception of the infinite value of human nature, if it has quickened our moral endeavours and aspirations by revealing to us boundless possibilities of goodness, if it has delivered us from the fear of death and awakened in us the hope of a future destiny which neither time nor change can arrest, it is to the revelation of the divine humanity, the manifestation of God in Christ that all this is due.

Passing, however, from these general considerations, if we attempt to take a closer view of the content and meaning of this doctrine, we are at once brought face to face with those intellectual difficulties which have made it through long ages the arena of theological controversy. The very enunciation of the idea of the union in the person of Christ of the human and divine—the idea, in other words, of an individual personality who is,

and is conscious of being, at once infinite and finite, God and man—would seem to present a problem which, as involving directly and absolutely contradictory elements, it is not wonderful that all the subtlety of the acutest intellects should in vain have attempted to solve. If our notions of divinity and humanity contain heterogeneous or contradictory elements, it is a truism to say that we can no more combine them in the conception of one and the same personality than we can think of a square circle, or a quadrilateral triangle, or a straight curve. But do not the attributes we commonly ascribe to God, such as omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, immutability, express ideas which are essential to His nature, without which He would cease to be divine: and can we conceive of these as belonging to a Being who exists in time and space, who is mortal and mutable, who begins to be and passes away, and who, at least on one side of His nature, is but a transient link in a vast system of material causes and effects by which His individuality is infinitely transcended? If our notion of omnipresence be that which is not limited in space, of eternity that which is not conditioned by time, how can we conceive of a Being who is at once omnipresent and

confined to a single spot, who begins to exist and who never had a beginning? How can thought compass the conception of a Being who is at once a helpless babe on an earthly mother's breast, and the omnipotent ruler of the universe: conscious of growth in knowledge and to the last ignorant of many things which God alone can know, and at the same time possessed of unlimited, unconditioned, all-comprehending knowledge; subject to pain and suffering and death, to the changeful experience of human life and the perpetual transitions of human feeling, and at the same time conscious of a changeless perfection and a blessedness over which no ripple of emotion, no shadow of grief or pain can pass?

Again, it may be asked, are there not moral incompatibilities between the human and divine natures, which forbid their co-existence in a single subject? Does not the idea of human nature involve, if not the necessity, at least the possibility of sin? Does not moral freedom mean the power of self-determination, and therefore of wrong determination, and would not virtue or goodness lose its essential character, if our nature were incapable of evil? Can we then unite in one self-identical personality a

nature of which this is the essential characteristic, and a nature absolutely and immutably good, with regard to whom experience of temptation, of the conflicts and struggles by which the moral development of a finite spirit is attained, is inconceivable, to whom it would be blasphemy to ascribe, not only sin, but even the possibility of sin?

To obviate this difficulty of uniting incompatible attributes in a single self-conscious subject, popular thought has sometimes had recourse to the too obvious expedient of separating in time the seemingly contradictory elements, and of ascribing some of the acts and experiences of Christ to the divine, and others to the human, side of His composite nature. As man, He passed through the changeful experiences of human life, its physical and mental growth, its gradually expanding knowledge, its moral temptations and conflicts, its manifold sorrows and sufferings, and especially the physical pain and mental agony of His passion, and the death with which it terminated. These were experiences which it is impossible that an omnipotent, immutable Being should undergo. On the other hand, in His miraculous works, His power over nature, His arresting of disease and restoring life to the dead, His trans-

figuration, resurrection, and ascension—in these a superhuman glory flashed forth from beneath the veil of His humanity, and the presence in Him of a divine nature was disclosed.

But the obvious answer is, that any such separation of divine from human acts and experiences is really the dissolving or rending in twain of the unity of Christ's person and life. It virtually asserts that He was not always, throughout His whole life, the God-man, but only now the God and now the man, now left in simple manhood to experience the weaknesses to which flesh is heir, and now, as the Godhead re-appeared, performing acts transcending mortal power, and in which the humanity could have no part. The God and the man are here really separate personalities, exerting alternately the powers peculiar to each; and there is no link, or only an external and artificial link, between them. On any such supposition, it is impossible to speak of the Divinity of Christ, inasmuch as from a large part of His life the divine element is absent; and equally impossible to speak of His humanity, which in the remaining portion of His life is suppressed or superseded by the superhuman element.

Moreover, the moral results of the Incarnation are entirely subverted by a theory which ascribes, not all, but only some acts to the divine nature in Christ, and not all, but only some to the human. It is the manifestation of God *in* humanity that lends its special moral and spiritual efficacy to the Christian religion. Indeed, as I have already said, it is just in those aspects of the life of Christ which, according to this view, are to be ascribed to His human as distinct from His divine nature—His susceptibility to pain and sorrow and death, His exposure to, and victory over, temptation—it is just in these that God seems to come nearest to us, and the sense of divine sympathy touches and appeals to us, in a way which the notion of a physical omnipotence and immutability would render impossible. Whatever, again, our theoretical conception of the doctrine of Atonement may be, for many minds the sufferings and death of Christ would be deprived of their atoning value and efficacy, if there were nothing more in them than the sufferings and death of a merely human hero, or of a human personality from which the divine element is withdrawn. Lastly, if the elements of infinitude and finitude, deity and humanity, be

regarded as contradictory, it is obvious that the problem of uniting them in one personal subject is not solved, but only evaded, by reducing the contradictory phenomena to succession or alternation in time. A Being, whose consciousness is held to be that of one continuous self-identical subject, yet who passes by alternation from a human life to a divine and *vice versa*, is for thought an impossible conception. If, as above said, we cannot conceive of a circle which is at the same time a square, as little can we conceive of a figure which is *alternately* square and circle.

Is there then, we now proceed to ask, no intelligible solution of the problem before us? We have seen that the answer, in which many are content to rest, is simply that the Incarnation is a theological mystery, a doctrine authoritatively revealed and to be received by faith, yet which relates to things transcending human reason. But though it is possible for faith to accept what reason cannot explain, it cannot perform the feat of uniting in one thought ideas that are absolutely contradictory or incompatible. Another course, however, is open to us. Rationalistic criticism has often pronounced that to be self-contradictory which deeper thought has been able to reconcile; and perhaps we may be

able to show in the sequel that the problem involved in the doctrine of the Incarnation is an insoluble one, only because of certain false or inadequate presuppositions as to the nature of God or the nature of man, which are common to many, both of the defenders and of the assailants of the doctrine. In what follows I shall briefly examine some of the solutions which we must pronounce to be inadequate, and then I shall attempt at least to point out the direction in which a true or adequate solution seems to lie.

The history of the doctrine of the Person of Christ is for the most part the history of expedients from opposite points of view to reconcile the apparently contradictory character of the elements it involves, and to make the union of these elements in one self-conscious personality no longer inconceivable. The various heresies, which have been condemned in successive authoritative declarations of the faith of the Church, have been simply attempts to accomplish this result by softening or explaining away either the one or the other side of the irreconcilable combination. Divinity and humanity being conceived of as reciprocally exclusive, the only resource of theological experts has been, either so to manipulate or tamper with the

human nature of Christ as to make it capable of a personal union with the divine, or, on the other hand, so to modify the idea of the divine nature as to make it capable of a personal union with the human.

To achieve the former result—to render it conceivable that an infinite, omnipotent, immutable nature should enter into personal union with a nature subject to weakness, suffering, and death—the human nature, or the human side of Christ's personality, has been virtually suppressed by reducing it to a mere phantasmal appearance or dramatic show, or, again, by leaving out of the composite personality some essential element of human nature and making the divine the only substantial element in the person of Christ.

On the other hand, starting from the unquestionable presupposition that, whatever else Christ was, He was really and completely human, a Being subject to the progressive changes, the weakness, sorrows, sufferings of ordinary human nature, the apparent impossibility of conceiving Him as at the same time exalted above all imperfection and change, has been met by reducing the divine element in His person simply to a divine or super-human influence analogous to that of prophetic

inspiration, perpetually operating on His human consciousness and bringing it into unbroken harmony with the mind and will of God.

It would be impossible within the limits assigned to me to follow out in the order of time the emergence of these and other subtle theological devices in the history of the doctrine. But it may aid us in our treatment of the subject briefly to examine, in a general way and apart from historical incidents, some of the foregoing and other attempts, starting either from the human or the divine side, to obviate the seeming contradiction involved in the idea of the God-man, or of a personality at once human and divine.

In the history of Christian thought it has been the tendency of many minds so to adjust their conception of the divine element in the person of Christ as to bring it into harmony with the admitted presupposition of His real and proper humanity. This tendency, it may be conceded, is to be traced not merely to a theoretical, but also to a practical and religious source. The religious ends of the Incarnation would, it is maintained, be sacrificed, if in any way we tamper with the simple and veritable humanity of Christ. The religious value of the life of Christ arises in

a great measure from His perfect sympathy with us and from the ideal of human excellence which He sets before us. Any mysterious grandeur thrown around His personality would be dearly bought, if it removed Him beyond the range of our human sympathies, or made it impossible for us to think of Him as in any real sense sharing our sorrows, infirmities, temptations. Human grief and pain have found their deepest consolation in the thought of One who was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; and in the struggle with the manifold temptations of life we gain new fortitude from the example of Him who was "in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin." Moreover, what lends its supreme moral worth to Christianity is the ideal it presents in the character and life of Christ of what humanity essentially is and of what in all men it may become. It communicates a new impulse to moral endeavour to contemplate in Him a revelation of the hidden beauty and greatness of our nature, and where abstract moral precepts and maxims would fail to move us, it lends a new inspiration to virtue to behold the highest moral perfection embodied in a form that draws forth all the intensity of our human affections.

But, it is argued, all this consolation and en-

couragement are lost the moment you introduce an exceptional, superhuman element into the conception of Christ's person. Not only does the mind become confused in the attempt to grasp such a notion as that of a Being half-human, half-divine, but the life and history of such a Being are deprived of their exemplary value. What we need is a type, not of superhuman, but of human excellence. The supposed presence in Christ of an unknowable, incalculable element checks the flow of moral sympathy; and if it elevates Him into a mysterious dignity and grandeur, it removes Him beyond the range of vital fellowship with us. If an example is to afford any stimulus to effort, it must be an example, not of what is possible for an angel or a God, but of what is possible for a man. It gives me no encouragement in facing the world's temptations to be told how they were overcome by a Being, whose human weakness was reinforced by combination with omnipotence. It does not make me more courageous in the war with evil to witness an infallible Being coming scatheless out of it. Set before me the example of a being of flesh and blood, and however splendid it be, I can at all events feel rebuked by its faultless purity; but I am not in the least humiliated by the example of

a God in human form. If Christ was man and nothing more than man, though I fall miserably short of the perfect, flawless moral beauty of His life, I can at least try to be like Him and be ennobled by the effort; but is there not something futile in the thought of a finite being straining after resemblance to infinite perfection?

The result of this line of argument is, it is maintained, that we must reject any doctrine of the person of Christ which would make His nature essentially different from our own. Different in degree it may be and is, but the absolute goodness we ascribe to Him, leaves Him still one with us in our relation to God, as the creature to the Creator, the finite spirit to the Infinite. This, indeed, does not preclude a very real and intimate relation of the mind and will of Christ to the mind and will of God. The individuality of each human spirit does not prevent a great kindred intelligence from exerting a powerful or dominating influence over other minds. In thought, feeling, and action, we lie open to controlling impressions and influences from others, and especially from men of genius or of great force of character. And if we conceive of this superiority as heightened to infinitude, and, on the other hand, of the mind on which

it acts as receptive beyond all ordinary minds of moral and religious impression, we shall have before us the idea of a relation of Christ to God which, without suppressing His human individuality, is of a very profound and intimate character, and to which we may even without error apply the formula of the union in one personality of the human nature with the divine.

The view which I have thus described, which is in substance the Deistic or Unitarian view of the person of Christ, is not without a certain measure of plausibility; but, without anticipating other considerations which will come before us in the sequel, I shall content myself here with remarking that it is based on a superficial and erroneous conception of the relation of God to the human spirit, and one which, if carried out to its logical results, would be fatal not only to any recognition of a divine element in Christ, but to any spiritual life in man. We need, it is urged, a sympathizing and therefore a human Saviour; and to ascribe to Him a superhuman elevation of nature is to remove Him beyond the range of our human sympathies, our human sorrows and temptations.

But the answer is, Can God not sympathize

with us? Is it not a false conception of the nature of God which ascribes to Him a moveless impassibility, a rigid immutability, impervious to any participation in the trials and sorrows of His children? God is love; but does not love lack its very essence, its supreme expression, if we think of Him as incapable of compassion, of sympathetic emotion, for the calamities and griefs that befall its object? Would it not be to ascribe a spurious elevation to Him, to suppose Him capable of contemplating from the height of a pitiless immobility the hapless fate of the beings He has made? Does it destroy the reality of Christ's sorrow and suffering for man to think of it as a sorrow which, while truly human, penetrates to the very heart of God? Is it so that moral elevation stifles compassion for suffering, or even grief and pain for sin; that the nearer a human spirit approaches to perfection, the more incapable does it become of grieving for the faults and sins it cannot itself commit, or for the moral ruin which cannot fall upon itself? And when we conceive of moral excellence as absolute, of a Being absolutely and immutably good, are we forced to think of the range of His sympathies as annulled, and not rather as infinitely expanded?

Again, it is urged that what we want is a

human, not a superhuman or infinite ideal, an example, not of what is possible for a God in human shape, or for a human nature rendered infallible by association or combination with an omnipotent, divine nature, but of what is possible for man, for a nature really and simply human. But the answer is, that not the latter but the former, not a finite but an infinite ideal, is what we truly want. It is of the very nature of the moral and spiritual life that its ideal is not a finite one. Our aim as spiritual beings is not likeness to man, but likeness to God, participation in a divine and eternal life. The goal of spiritual attainment ever recedes as we advance; and instead of there being only a measurable, finite ideal for us to aim at, it is the stimulus to all moral endeavour that, however far we have attained, yet ever, far beyond and above us, rises the infinite moral ideal in its inexhaustible beauty and glory. It is just the best, purest, noblest human souls, who are least satisfied with themselves and their own spiritual attainments; and the reason is, that the human is *not* a nature essentially different from the divine, but a nature which, just because it is in essential affinity with God, can be satisfied with nothing less than a divine perfection.

It appears, then, that the union of the divine and human in the person and life of Christ, though in one sense unique and unparalleled, is no visionary unintelligible grandeur, nor is the aspiration after likeness to it or participation in it the dream of a perfection to which, wind ourselves ever so high, our finite limits forbid our ever attaining or even approximating,

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

As, in the sphere of intelligence, our gradual progress in knowledge is not simply an interminable series of attainments, without any final end or aim, but rather the pursuit, consciously or unconsciously, of an end which the very first step presupposes, an end which is real, absolute, complete; or again as, in the sphere of art, the productions of the great poet or painter are not mere isolated, aimless, sporadic strokes and flashes of genius, but presuppose and are the expression, ever more or less imperfect, of an ideal of beauty which, though he cannot define it, yet ever floats before or haunts his imagination, and prompts, guides, and governs his attempts to realize it,—so

is it in the sphere of the moral and spiritual life. Our endeavours and aspirations after goodness are not endeavours and aspirations without purpose or final cause ; nor are they the quest after the false infinitude which is merely the negation of every successive attainment.

It is true that in one sense moral and religious effort is the endeavour after the unattainable, after a goal which vanishes before us as we advance, an end which, as we toil after it up the steep ascent, ever eludes and fades away before us, and to which the holiest and saintliest of men seem to be no nearer at the end than at the beginning. Nevertheless the moral and spiritual end is no unreal and unrealized ideal. In every, even the first, faint effort after goodness, there is involved the presupposition of an ideal, an end, that is one, absolute, complete ; which is in itself eternally real, and to realize which is the secret impulse that underlies and prompts all our moral struggles and self-denials. It may be said, indeed, to be an ideal which has its seat in the bosom of God. Though, in one sense, we do not and never can know God, yet, in another, the knowledge of God, of infinite truth and goodness and beauty, is an element implicated with our whole spiritual life

and being, a divine principle and presupposition, to identify ourselves with which in absolute self-renunciation and self-surrender is the secret of all goodness and blessedness, and the revelation even in this poor, troubled, imperfect nature of ours, of a greatness nothing short of the infinite. And, on the other hand, it is, as we have seen, this very aspect of our nature which gives to moral evil, to sin, to a life whether of active wickedness or of dull and selfish worldliness and contentment with pleasure and self-indulgence, its darkest and direst complexion. For such a life is the turning of a light brighter than the sun into darkness, the squandering or bartering away of a boundless wealth, the suicidal abasement to the things that perish, of a nature destined by its very constitution and structure for participation in the very being and blessedness of God.

LECTURE XIV.

THEORIES OF THE INCARNATION.

(1) THEORIES THAT EXCLUDE OR MODIFY THE DIVINE ELEMENT IN THE NATURE OF CHRIST (*Continued*).

IN the last lecture I pointed out that the history of the doctrine of the Person of Christ is, for the most part, the history of expedients by which, starting from certain presuppositions as to the nature of God and the nature of man which made them absolutely irreconcilable, the impossible attempt was made to solve the problem of their union in one self-conscious personality. Divinity and humanity being so defined as to be reciprocally exclusive, the only resource of theological experts has been so to modify or tamper with either the one or the other side of the combination as to make the conception of their unity no longer unthinkable. I proposed, without attempting any historical account of the development of the

doctrine, to review, in a general way, some of these expedients, and I began by entering on an explanation and criticism of those theories which, starting from the real and proper humanity of Christ, endeavour to solve the problem of the Incarnation by modifying or manipulating the conception of the opposite or divine element in His person. The theory with which, at the close of the last lecture, we were engaged, is that which attempts to make the union conceivable by reducing the divine element simply to a communication of divine influence analogous in kind to that of prophetic inspiration, or even to the ordinary renewing and sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind and heart of the believer.

I now proceed to another theory which, though in common with the former it seeks a ground of reconciliation by modifying the conception of the divine element in the person of Christ, appeals in a much more profound way to our religious sympathies and aspirations, and has taken a deeper hold of the religious spirit of the Church both in ancient and modern times. The theory in question is that according to which the higher principle in the person of Christ is, not absolute Deity, but Deity by an act of

infinite condescension so divesting itself of its essential glory as to be capable of taking on itself the nature of man. In theological language this act has been expressed by such terms as '*humiliation*,' '*kenosis*,' '*depotentialisation*,' '*exinanition*'; and the idea intended to be conveyed is, that in order to effect the great end of the Incarnation, the union of the divine and the human in one self-conscious personality, God, or, more exactly, the eternal Logos or Son of God, by an act of self-limitation, denuded Himself of so much of His absolute power and glory as was incompatible with His taking upon Himself a real and veritable human nature. Humanity, in itself, is as incapable of containing the fulness of the divine essence as a cup of containing the immeasurable ocean. It would need, so to speak, a second Infinite to be the adequate receptacle or organ of the Infinite Spirit. But the Being who transcends all finite measures, in order to the manifestation of His redeeming love to mankind, humbled Himself, contracted or limited His essential infinitude, divested Himself of His transcendental attributes, so as to become capable of dwelling in, and identifying Himself with, the consciousness of a human subject, of participating in its physical and mental imper-

fections, its pains and sorrows and temptations, its whole experience from birth to death. The actions and sufferings of Christ are truly, and not in appearance only, the actions and sufferings of a human being in all points like as we are, sin only excepted ; but to give them their redemptive value as a manifestation of divine love, they must also be the acts and sufferings of a Being essentially divine. And if we cannot but think of God in His absolute nature as transcending all limitations, incapable of change or suffering or temptation or imperfection, the only way in which the life and experience of a suffering, dying Saviour can be thought of as divine, is by the self-limitation of the divine nature to the dimensions of a finite and mortal nature. The sacrifice of Christ is a divine sacrifice, but it cannot be that of Absolute Deity—for that is forever beyond the reach of change and suffering—but only that of Deity voluntarily humbling, impoverishing, limiting itself to the nature and life of humanity. For some such process of self-emptying, the sanction of Scripture is sought in the well-known New Testament texts which speak of Christ as one who “though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor” ; as one “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery

to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being formed in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

It is almost impossible to state this theory without involving ourselves in contradictions; yet I think it cannot be questioned that a profound element of truth underlies its logical inconsistencies, and that the motive which leads to it, and the idea of God on which it is based, appeal in a very real way to our moral and religious intuitions. Let us look briefly (1) at the speculative difficulties which beset this theory, and (2) at the underlying truth of which it is the inadequate form.

1. As to the speculative objections. Can we attach any meaning to the notion of a self-limiting, self-emptying God—the notion, that is, of omnipotence causing itself to become powerless, of omniscience resolving to be ignorant of what it knows, of an infinite will voluntarily determining itself to be incapable of willing? Does not such a notion involve the obvious contradiction of a nature which at once is and is not, which asserts itself in the very act of denying itself? A

power which represses power, is and remains powerful in the very act of self-repression. Not only does the lessening or depotentiating act contain in it the element of power which is supposed to be renounced, but the same contradiction must continue through the whole history of the self-repressing infinite. There would be no real humiliation in the life of the God-man if, after the first sublime act of renunciation, He ceased to be conscious of the infinite or divine power renounced, and all that remained was, at most, the memory of a past omnipotence that was no longer His. What lends, or is supposed to lend, redemptive value to the whole life of Christ and to its every experience of human suffering, is that it is the suffering of a self-renouncing God, of a divine Being who submits to the conditions of frail and finite humanity. The sublime act by which God humbles Himself to become man must, therefore, be perpetuated through the whole earthly career of Incarnate Deity. The contradiction which lies in this conception is thus one which is continuously repeated. The power that represses infinite power cannot be itself less than infinite. The notion of the self-limitation of an omnipotent Being is one which dissolves in the very attempt to grasp it.

The same line of reasoning applies to the omniscience of God. Can we construe in thought the idea of a Being who knows all things, resolving to renounce all or a part of His knowledge? A human being, through indolence or decaying intellectual power, may cease to know much of what was once his mental property; but even a human intelligence cannot by an act of will determine that it shall not know what it does know. And still more obviously is this true of Absolute Intelligence, of that Mind which can never experience failure or suspension of its all-penetrating, all-embracing apprehension. The resolution, on the part of Infinite Intelligence, to contract its knowledge to the limits of the finite or imperfect intelligence, is the resolution to become ignorant of what it knows. But to achieve that result, to carry into effect the resolution not to know any object of knowledge, it must think that object. In other words, it must know it in the very endeavour not to know it. The self-renunciation of omniscience, the self-reduction of infinite to finite knowledge, is thus a contradiction in terms.

But, passing from this fundamental objection, suppose it be conceded that the idea of a God, who lays aside His divine attributes and humbles Himself to become man, is not untenable, there

are insuperable objections which still remain. Wherein, it may be asked, does the depotentiated God differ from an ordinary man? A doctrine of the Incarnation is one which professes to hold by the divine and human in the person of Christ. But does not the theory of the humiliation or self-reduction of God drop the divine or infinite element altogether? The Being who limits or suppresses His infinitude becomes finite and nothing more. If the self-limitation be real, can we draw any distinction, when the process has taken place, between a simply finite being and an Infinite Being who has abandoned His infinitude? The same Being cannot abandon its infinitude and possess it. The finite personality which arises from the reduction or transmutation of the infinite into the finite, is, after the transmutation, as limited as any other human being. The reduced infinite cannot retain its infinitude even in memory or as the dream of a glorious past; for a being that is or has become wholly finite is incapable of conceiving the very idea of the infinite—if, that is, finite and infinite are exclusive, as on this theory they are.

Lastly, if God, or the Eternal Logos, lays aside, in order to become human, every divine attribute which would render the Incarnation or

union with a human personality impossible— ceases, in other words, to be omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient—what becomes, it may be asked, of the government of the world during the thirty years of this eclipse of divinity? Must we think of God as still retaining the plenitude of His divine power during the stage of humiliation? Then there was no real self-emptying or humiliation after all. The God who humbles Himself to become man and yet retains all that is essential to Deity, does not really humble Himself. The humanized, self-humiliated God is still seated on the throne of the Universe in full possession of His power and glory. To conceive of a providential empire of God unaffected by the laying aside of His divine glory, we should be driven to the impossible notion of a double Deity, a second omnipotence and omniscience taking up, during the stage of humiliation, the interrupted vocation of the Infinite. According to any such notion, there would be, not one God, but two, the celestial, undepotiated God, and the God who in Christ humbled Himself to the level of a weak and suffering man.

Driven by these and other difficulties involved in the doctrine of the self-humiliation of God, its

upholders have sometimes betaken themselves to a plausible modification of it. The *kenosis*, according to them, does not consist of the real and literal abandonment, but only of the *veiling or concealment*, of the divine presence and power under the form of humanity. God, in His infinite compassion and love, stooped to hide the splendours of His invisible essence under the guise of a human person and life. The essential Godhead was there from the miraculous conception to the crucifixion, but what was apparent was only the earthly form which, in His infinite condescension, God for our sake was pleased to assume. What the outward eye seemed to itself to see, was a babe slumbering on an earthly mother's breast; what was really there, was the presence of the omnipotent God. What the world beheld was a youth who grew in wisdom and in knowledge; but in the real essence of His being there was here nothing less than the omniscient Author and Sustainer of all created things. To outward appearance there was the presence of a man, who was no stranger to human infirmities, who seemed to hunger and thirst, to be worn with the toil and travail of life, to be soothed by human affection, saddened by human hatred and hostility, to feel the pangs of physical pain and the

oppression of mental anguish, to be subjected at last to the shame and pain of a violent death from which his human nature recoiled in dismay; but underneath all this, which was but the outward and shadowy form, the real personality was that of the Being who is supremely exalted above all human infirmity, to whom earthly change and sorrow and death are forever unknown.

But is it not a fatal objection to any such representation as this, that, instead of a manifestation of God, it turns the person and life of Christ into a concealment of God, makes Him to be, not God manifest in the flesh, but God disguised and hidden under the illusory form of the flesh? Instead of seeing the moral glory of God reflected in a perfect human life, of discerning in His submission to sorrow and pain and death a revelation of infinite love and compassion, we are led to look on it as a mask, which hides from us the face of God and elaborately deprives us of all consciousness of His presence or insight into His character. Moreover, such a conception transforms that whole wondrous life, which we have been accustomed to regard as the perfect ideal of human excellence, into a scenic or fictitious display, a deceptive appearance of liability to human infirmity, in one who is really

at the very moment possessed of superhuman power, of absolute superiority to all human change and trial. Surely, if there be any way in which it is possible to attach a real meaning to the conception of God humbling Himself to become man, it cannot be one in which there is no real but only a deceptive semblance of humiliation; surely, if the union of the divine and human in the person of Christ be anything more than a phrase, it cannot be a mere external show of unity, in which the divine element remains apart from the human and only utilizes the human as an artificial and temporary disguise.

2. What, then, is the element of truth which, as I have said, underlies the doctrine of the humiliation or self-limitation of God? It is, I answer, an attempt to render conceivable the profound truth of a sympathizing, self-sacrificing God. It pertains to the very essence of love to make the experience of the object loved, its own. And further, love falls short of its highest expression, unless it can manifest itself in suffering and sacrifice. What in its weakness or pain or sorrow, or in its consciousness of guilt and sin, the human spirit craves for is, not an omnipotent Creator and Ruler of the world, a Being enthroned in a supreme

elevation above the world, absolutely impassive, incapable of being affected by the evils that befall the creatures He has made, or of experiencing on their behalf the faintest diminution of His unchangeable blessedness. If we ask what lends its power and attractiveness to the Christian idea of God as Father of Spirits, I think the answer, when we analyse our own feeling, will be that it enables us to think of Him as of a kindred nature with our own, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, rejoicing in our joys and grieving with our griefs, knowing and appreciating them as not foreign to His own experience, and in the time of our calamity and distress susceptible of a pain and sorrow even deeper than our own. Nay, more than this, what the idea of Fatherly affection brings before us is a love which takes the form of moral sympathy, a love which is not alienated by the unworthiness of its object, which no injury can estrange or ingratitude can exhaust, and which so links us to itself by an inner bond of spiritual affinity as, whilst itself untainted by guilt, to feel even more acutely than ourselves the burden of our moral degradation, and to be ready to submit to any sacrifice, even the supreme sacrifice of life itself, for our moral restoration.

But it is obvious that in order to our associating this conception with our idea of God, we must not suppose Him to lay aside or divest Himself of anything that belongs to His own nature and essence. If the Infinite had to renounce its infinitude, if God had to become something less than God, in order to identify Himself with human experience, it is a truism to say that the life of Christ would not be a revelation of God, but only of something less than God. If a perfect human life contain elements which are foreign to and beyond the scope of the divine life, then it is obvious that in these elements God could not be revealed. What gives its ineffable power over human hearts to the life of Christ is that we can think of it as a life in which the very mind and heart of God are disclosed; that we can think of *His* thoughts as God's thoughts, *His* feelings as God's feelings, of the love that breathed through *His* words and deeds as, not a reduced copy or artificial symbol of something in God, but as of the very essence of the divine love itself, so bound up with the divine nature as to make it possible for Him with literal truth to say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Instead of—by some inconceivable process—lowering or lessening His essential nature in order

to make Christ's sorrow and suffering a manifestation of Himself, that sorrow and suffering must be the true, and, in one sense, the highest manifestation of the nature of God in all its essential and unmodified reality. If Christ be the manifestation of God, so far from the Incarnation being only possible by the laying aside of the essential attributes of divinity, it must be possible to regard it as itself an expression, nay, as the supreme expression of the nature of God. God must be seen not to shroud His divine essence in the one perfect human life, but to shine forth there in the full effulgence of His glory.

But how, it may be asked, can such a notion as that of a suffering God be made conceivable? Are not omnipotence, immutability, unchangeable blessedness, essential attributes of His nature? Can we think of a God whose power is other than absolute, whose blessedness can undergo any loss or change, a God to whom it is possible to ascribe weakness, pain, sorrow? If not a contradiction in terms, is it not blasphemy to speak of a weak, suffering, dying God? Now it may help us to answer such questions, if we consider for a moment whether there is not something erroneous or defective in our ordinary notion of such attributes as I

have just named—whether an omnipotence that is simply unlimited power, a blessedness which is only sheer impassibility or inaccessibility to pain, are really qualities which we can ascribe to an absolutely perfect spiritual nature. Can we, for example, identify the omnipotence we ascribe to God with a mere quantitatively unlimited power? If that were a true idea, should we not be debarred from saying that there are many things which God cannot do? In the language of Scripture, He is the Being “who cannot lie,” who “cannot look upon iniquity,” who “can by no means clear the guilty,” who “cannot deny Himself.” What such language implies in God is, not mere unlimited power, but power limited by moral character, power bounded, restrained, lessened of its quantitative infinitude, by moral and spiritual conditions.

And if we pass from the negative to the positive side, we shall find that the highest power we can ascribe to a morally perfect being, is not power to do everything, but power directed to and determined by moral and spiritual ends, power to think and do only that which is good and right. His dominion over the world is not the omnipotence of unlimited physical force, but the

omnipotence of intelligence, of truth, of righteousness, of love. It is true that we can and do think of God as exerting creative and controlling power over nature, and it would seem that we have here a realm in which the omnipotence which is simply absolute force can be ascribed to Him. But, even here, the dominion which pertains to Him is at once less and greater than unlimited power. For, as we have seen, there is no such thing as a material universe which is merely material, no matter which is unrelated to spirit, and does not contain in it the potentiality of spiritual life. Even mute and material things are not what they would be if nature were not in its very constitution and essence related to spirit, and did not contain in it an undeveloped element pointing to spiritual life as its supreme end. There is a sense, therefore, in which even creative power is not mere physical omnipotence, but power limited and determined by moral and spiritual ends.

The same thing is true of the attributes of immutability and impassibility which ordinary thought ascribes to God. The divine immutability is not the mere absence or impossibility of change, but the immutability of absolute spiritual perfection; and *that*, when we examine what it means, is con-

sistent with an infinite flexibility and variety of experience. A human being, the more nearly he approaches to perfection, becomes possessed of, or approximates to, such unchangeableness: which is, not stereotyped sameness, but unalterableness of moral principle, unbending rectitude, unswerving goodness, the impossibility of deviation by one hair's-breadth from the course which conscience dictates. But this kind of immutability, so far from excluding, is compatible with and even necessitates a perpetual diversity and variety of feeling and action. A man of great force of character is continually finding new occasions for the manifestation and application of moral principle. In the ever-varying phenomena of human life, in the trials, difficulties, perplexities of individuals, in the complex relations of society, opportunity is furnished for the exercise and illustration of a spirit of truth and love, of devotion to the eternal principles of truth and righteousness. So far from being fixed in one rigid attitude of immobility, there is not a single incident in the ever-changing panorama of human life in which such a mind may not find new scope for its energies; whilst yet, with all this infinite flexibility, it remains ever self-consistent, rooted on the immutable rock of moral

principle on which all things in God's universe are based.

Nor is there any reason why the same principle should not be applied to that Infinite Mind which, in one sense, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is a spurious immutability we ascribe to God, when we conceive of Him as existing in isolated self-completeness, remote from the world He has made and the beings He has formed in His own image. If the creation of the world be not a mere arbitrary act, if it be a product of something in the nature, and not in the mere incalculable will, of God, then the true idea of His relation to the world is that of a spirit which is ever revealing and realizing itself in all things and beings, in the life of individuals, in the order of society, in the events of history and the progress of the race. Its essential characteristic is not moveless, lifeless sameness, but an infinite originality that is ever pouring forth richer, fuller disclosures of its inexhaustible wisdom and beauty and goodness.

Again, the same defect is to be traced in the conception of impassibility, or superiority to suffering, which is often associated with the divine nature. At first sight, it seems to exalt the nature of God to think of Him as possessed of an abso-

lute blessedness which is incapable of interruption, of increase or diminution. Can any creature add to the sources of the divine happiness? Is there any power in the universe that can assail the untroubled joy of the Ever-blessed? Was there ever a time when God was more or less happy than now? If it is sin that has brought death into the world and all our woe, must not the absolutely sinless be the absolutely sorrowless? Must we not think of the rest of God, participation in which is the future destiny of the redeemed, as an unbroken tranquillity, a state of being whose ineffable felicity can never be marred by grief or pain?

I answer that any such notion of imperturbable happiness is false to the deepest principles of the spiritual life, a day-dream which vanishes at the touch of reflection. Instead of a Being of infinite love, whose life embraces all that lives, the God it imagines, when closely viewed, is but an apathetic phantom, a nature from which the deepest elements of spiritual satisfaction are excluded, and betwixt whose eternal solitariness and eternal selfishness there is but a step. This, at least, we can plainly see, that, amongst human beings, incapacity to suffer is not a sign of largeness but of littleness; and, on the other hand,

that every degree of spiritual elevation brings with it a new possibility of suffering. Even of our physical nature it is true that a more developed and highly strung nervous system, if it is susceptible of keener pleasures, brings with it also a susceptibility to more numerous and intenser pains; and the same thing applies with still greater force to our higher nature. "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." It is ever the mind of largest compass, the mind cast in the finest mould, that is most susceptible of suffering. A little, narrow, uncultured spirit is liable to comparatively few troubles. The range alike of its joys and sorrows is limited, and it escapes untouched where a greater spirit would be pierced through with many sorrows. And the same is true of the moral nature. The placidity that cannot be disturbed by the sin and sorrow of the world, the self-absorbed happiness that is unmoved by the spectacle of human guilt and wretchedness, is a sign not of moral elevation but of moral degradation. On the other hand, greatness of soul is manifested by nothing so much as by the width and intensity of its sympathies, the capacity to identify its own life with the life, its own good with the good, of others.

Nor is there any reason why we should not apply the same principle to the nature of Him in whom all finite existences live and move and have their being. To attribute to God susceptibility to suffering, is not to lower, but to elevate our conception of His nature. An infinitude which rendered Him incapable of moral emotion, of pity, compassion, delight in the good and recoil from the evil that befell the objects of His love—this would be a spurious infinitude. To ascribe it to God would be to sacrifice moral expansion to a metaphysical figment. Love means taking up other lives into our own; and our life grows larger in proportion to the number of other lives embraced in it, and the completeness of our self-identification with them. God's infinitude lies, not in blank and boundless impassibility, but in this, that He can take up, not some, but all finite lives into His own; so that, if we may so speak, there is not one ripple of emotion, one pang of pain or sorrow, one care or grief or trouble, in the least or lowest spirit in His universe, that is not reflected in the infinite heart of God.

Finally, it is to be considered that a love that was incapable of suffering would fall short of the highest expression of love. A being who cannot

sacrifice himself, is a being who is shut out from that kind of experience in which love finds its supreme manifestation. If there were no sense in which God could give Himself to the beings He has made in His own image, or could bear the burden of pain and sorrow for their redemption from evil, then that in which instinctively we discern the highest ideal of moral nobility would be an element of greatness and goodness unknown to God. Blot out from human life and human history all the goodness that owes its existence to pain and takes the form of sacrifice, and you would obliterate, not only that which is most beautiful, but that which is most heroic and sublime in our moral experience. And if there be in the divine nature an iron-bound impassibility which this experience can never penetrate, then our highest ideal of goodness can no longer be associated with the Divine Being.

If any one still insist that it seems irreverence, if not blasphemy, to speak of a suffering God, or to ascribe in any way pain or unhappiness to the Ever-blessed, then, let me add, it may in some measure meet his difficulty to reflect, that all moral suffering contains or carries with it what may be called an element of compensation, in virtue of which it is transmuted into a deeper joy. May it not even be

said that the deepest, intensest kind of happiness is ever that which has an element of pain in it, that the purest delight is not the mere rapture of unmingled enjoyment, but that in which an ingredient of suffering is intermingled and absorbed? Is there any one who has ever borne toil or pain or sorrow for the sake of those whom he dearly loves, who does not know that there is a strange sweetness in that very sorrow, a subtle joy that thrills through and masters all the anguish and turns it by a spiritual alchemy into the purest bliss a human heart can know? And if this be so, then surely what we must find in Christ as the God-man is, not a being who stript or emptied Himself of His essential divinity in order to share in the weakness and suffering of humanity, but a manifestation of God in all the plentitude of the divine nature; and the whole life of the Man of Sorrows—His earthly lowliness and meanness, His mortal weakness, grief, and sorrow, His loneliness and forsakenness, His drinking of the cup of suffering to the dregs, yea, in His very crucifixion and death—must be to us the disclosure of an ineffable joy triumphing over sorrow, of a divine bliss in sacrifice, which is the last, highest revelation of the nature of God.

LECTURE XV.

THE IDEA OF THE INCARNATION.

2. THEORIES THAT EXCLUDE OR MODIFY THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN THE NATURE OF CHRIST.

WE have, in the last two lectures, seen that the aim of all theories of the Incarnation is to reconcile the apparently contradictory character of the two elements, the infinite and finite, the divine and human, and to render the union of these two elements in one self-conscious personality rationally conceivable. The various heresies on the subject, which have been condemned in successive authoritative declarations of the orthodox faith, have been simply attempts to achieve this result by modifying or explaining away one or other side of an impossible combination. Starting from the idea of the real and proper humanity of Christ—from the presupposition, in other words, that whatever else He was, He was veritably and completely

human, limited in power and knowledge, subject to the imperfections, the progressive changes, the pains and sufferings, the moral temptations, which are common to every member of the race—the apparent impossibility of conceiving of Him as at the same time the conscious possessor of divine attributes, as omnipotent, omniscient, superior to all change and imperfection, was attempted to be overcome by various modifications of the latter or divine element in Christ's person, two of which I have endeavoured to explain and criticise. The first of these attempted to make the union in one person of a divine and a human nature conceivable by reducing the former to a mere communication of divine influence, analogous in kind to prophetic inspiration. The second of these theories, with which we were occupied in the last lecture, is that of the *kenosis*, the voluntary humiliation or self-limitation of God, according to which the Eternal Logos is supposed, by an act of infinite condescension, to have denuded or emptied Himself of so much of His divine nature as would have rendered Him incapable of entering into union with, or constituting an ingredient in, a finite human personality.

I now turn to the consideration of those theories

in which the problem is attempted to be solved by modifying in some way, not the divine, but the human element in Christ's person ; and I shall confine myself to one specimen of these theories, which I select for examination, not only because in its day it attained to no little notoriety and influence, but also because—as we have seen in another instance—though itself untenable, it contains an element of truth and the suggestion of a real solution of the problem, after which its author was unconsciously groping.

Is it possible to conceive of two complete spiritual natures, two self-conscious, self-determining beings, as losing their separate individuality and becoming so blended as to constitute one self-conscious personality? Leaving out of sight for the moment the opposition of infinite and finite, can we think of one conscious being as dropping its independent identity and passing into that of another, or of two such beings as abandoning each its own independent consciousness and spiritual life, and becoming so transformed as to constitute a new personality which is both in one? Writers of fiction, giving the rein to their imagination, have sometimes pictured a single human being as leading two lives, not only distinct from each other,

but each characterized by intellectual and moral qualities in glaring contrast with those of the other. But, to render this conception not palpably absurd, the separate lives are supposed to be led, not at one and the same time, but successively or alternately; so that in one phase of his existence the subject drops all consciousness of the preceding phase, and feels no more sense of moral responsibility for the acts and intromissions of his former self than if they had been those of another and different human agent.

But the wildest imagination has never attempted to represent a single personality as, all through its career and at every moment of it, possessed of a double consciousness, or a single self which was the combined result of two selves reduced to one. Material substances may by chemical composition lose their separate characteristics and be reduced to a third which differs from both; but is it not the essential characteristic of a spiritual subject—that which raises it above the unconscious existence of nature, above the life of the animal in which the race is all, the individual nothing—that it possesses an individuality, an isolated identity, in virtue of which it is *for* itself to the exclusion of every other, which can be invaded or shared by no other, and

the moral life and acts of which are inalienably and unalterably its own? Even if it be possible to think of two human beings as so closely alike in their intellectual and moral natures that their ideas should be perfectly coincident, their feelings and affections absolutely sympathetic, their wills in every volition and action all through life completely concurrent, they would still be, not one mind and will, but two: the intelligence of each its own intelligence, the process by which its opinions are reached a process going on in its own mind and not in the other's, the moral acts of each involving a personal responsibility intransferable to the other. However close, again, the relations of kindred, community, nationality, of friendship, affection, common interests and inclinations, can the closest of these for a moment break down the impassable barrier between each and every other human soul? Moreover, does not the notion of a single personality embracing two complete and independent individualities become, if possible, still more inconceivable, when the union is that, not of two finite natures, but of an infinite and a finite, a divine and a human nature? Even if two finite intelligences and wills could be conceived to act together and retain their individual freedom, when mysteriously

united in one personality, could we say as much of a finite nature in personal alliance with an infinite? Can an infinite consciousness co-exist with a finite consciousness without absorbing and swamping it? Can an omnipotent will be conceived to reside in the same spirit with a limited, human will without dominating and suppressing it? In such a coalition, would not all real activity on the part of the latter be suspended, and its moral independence, its very existence, be virtually extinguished?

Now it is this apparent impossibility of a human nature in all its individual completeness, co-existing in the same personality with a divine nature, which led the early writer to whom I have referred, Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea in the fourth century, to propound a theory of the person of Christ which—however strange it sounds to the modern ear, and however crude and untenable it may appear—is not without its value as pointing to a deeper solution of the problem after which its author was unconsciously striving. Two spiritual natures, two self-consciousnesses and wills in one personality, is, according to the view just stated, an impossible conception. Neither a divine nor a human spirit can renounce its

individuality, can invade or suppress the essential, inviolable independence of another, or fuse and blend itself with another so that they become no longer two, but one. In the person of Christ, as little as in that of any purely human agent, can there be two souls. Unless we rend His personality asunder, the spiritual, self-conscious nature in Him must be one; it must be either human or divine, but it cannot be both. If, therefore, we hold that in Christ's person there is a union of a divine with a human nature, the only conceivable way, it was maintained, in which this union can exist is by the divine spirit taking the place of the human spirit in the composite personality. Thus Christ's personality, whilst it resembles all human personalities in this that it consists of a bodily organism and a spirit, differs from all merely human personalities in this that the human, corporeal nature is animated by a divine, not a human spirit, that in Him the bodily organism is human but the spirit is divine.

In support of this theory it was urged that it is the only view which is consistent with, or lends meaning to, the language of the New Testament writers, and especially of the fourth Gospel, and to our Lord's own utterances as therein narrated, which

seem to claim for Him the consciousness of a being and life, not only prior to His earthly existence, but co-eternal with the very being and life of God. In outward appearance He was a being simply and wholly human, the son of an earthly mother, whose memory could go back only to the brief term of years embraced in His earthly career; yet it is declared that He was the Logos or Word that was in the beginning with God, and that was God, and by whom all things were made, whose own consciousness immeasurably transcended the brief period of His human life, and who could speak of Himself as the only-begotten Son who was eternally in the bosom of the Father, of a glory which He had with God before the world was, and to which He was to return when His transient mortal life should be ended. The consciousness which could thus express itself, though by human lips, was the utterance of a mind that far outstripped the range of finite memory, and was nothing less, under an earthly appearance, than the self-consciousness of God.

The main argument by which this theory was supported was that to which I have already referred, namely, that it is the only theory that is consistent with the unity of Christ's person, or

escapes from ascribing to it elements absolutely incompatible. There is no more difficulty in conceiving of Christ's person than of that of any other human being as the union of a body and a soul. But a body inhabited by two souls, and especially by a divine and a human soul, is altogether unthinkable. If the consciousness of Christ be not broken up into an impossible dualism, it must be either human or divine, but it cannot be both; and to those who hold by the divinity of Christ, it must be only and wholly divine.

A theory from which modern thought has so completely departed it is scarcely necessary to criticise, save only in so far as the criticism may bring to light the element of truth that underlies it or to which it points. In the first place, it is obvious that it gives us no real union of the divine and human in Christ's person, but only the union of a *maimed* or mutilated humanity with the divine. In order to achieve that union, it leaves out of the nature that is to be united with God its highest and most important element. If human nature consist of body and mind, or—according to the psychology of the time of Apollinaris—of body, soul, and spirit, that is, of a corporeal or fleshly organism, of a principle of animal life common to man

with the animal creation, and, finally, of the spirit, the principle of intelligence and moral action,—that is no real union with the divine which strikes out the latter, nobler element of human nature, and conceives of God as uniting Himself only with that in man which he shares with the beasts that perish. The result, in short, which it gives as the representation of the person of Christ is, not a divine in union with a human nature, but a divine nature in union with the nature of an animal.

Again, the whole redemptive work of Christ would lose its value and significance if the soul—the spiritual element in Him—were not really human. The remedy must be co-extensive with the disease; and the malady of sin is one which affects our higher or spiritual nature, and not primarily our corporeal or animal nature. The merely animal nature is incapable alike of moral good and moral evil. The ultimate source and seat of sin is not, as we have seen, in the merely animal impulses and desires, but in the depraved spirit that turns these impulses and desires into its instruments, wastes its boundless energies on the gratification of the flesh, and finds its good in that which is incommensurate with them. The estrangement from God, in which lies the very essence of sin, is the estrangement

not of the body but of the soul, the selfishness that taints and corrupts the moral nature at its source. The salvation, therefore, which we need is one which goes to the very source and root of the moral disorder, and introduces a new and heaven-born life into the morally diseased organism of humanity. The being, therefore, who is the primal origin of this new life for man, must be, not simply a divine spirit, but a human spirit in whom the barrier of selfishness that separates the soul from God is broken down, and the whole nature of man is brought into perfect unison with the divine.

Lastly, it is just here that we find the answer to the speculative difficulty in which this imperfect theory originates. To its author, the union of a real and complete human nature with a divine seemed to trench on the inviolable individuality and independence that are essential to the moral life, and to involve the absurdity of two souls, two self-consciousnesses, in one personality. The nature and life of a God-man seemed to him equivalent to the impossible fusion of two persons into one, or into what was virtually a person neither human nor divine, but a monstrosity produced by a combination of both. But, in so

thinking, his error lay in applying outward and mechanical categories to the realm of spiritual things, and in his failure to conceive of that highest of all unities of which only spiritual natures are capable. So far from its being true that the existence of a finite, human spirit in the person of Christ excludes the presence therein of a divine spirit, it may rather be said that all spiritual life rests on the indwelling of the divine spirit in the human, and that union with God is the presupposition of all intelligence, all goodness, all moral and spiritual activity in man. Instead of the presence and action of God in the human spirit involving an impossible dualism, or a suppressing of human individuality, the true conception is rather that the divine life is the condition of the human, the atmosphere in which alone all spiritual life can exist; and that it is only in union with God that the individual spirit can realize itself and become possessor of the latent wealth of intelligence and goodness that pertains to it. It is true, indeed, that there is something unique in the person of Christ, and that a participation in the being and life of God can be predicated of Him as distinguished from all other members of the human race. But however true it be that the

relation of the divine and human in the person of Christ transcends, in one sense, all earthly parallel, it must yet be a union of which by its very structure and essence humanity is capable.

It may be well, therefore, to consider briefly what union with God or participation in the life of God, under the essential conditions of human nature, is possible. Can the Infinite Spirit dwell in the human without absorbing it, or involving a double consciousness? Can the spiritual life of man in any sense be identified with the life of God?

Now, in answer to these questions, I think I have already shown that the highest kind of unity is not that which is repelled, but which is created and conditioned by moral and spiritual individuality; that, in other words, the oneness which is most real and absolute is not that which is attained by the absence or suppression of individual distinctions, but that which involves yet transcends them. Of all the different kinds of unity, which is the most real and complete? The parts of a stone are all precisely alike, the parts of a piece of mechanism are all different from each other; in which case is the unity the deeper—in that in which all distinction is absent, or that in which each separate part has a distinct

character and function? In a mass of sandstone there is the unity of sameness; in a watch, a steam-engine, or other elaborately constructed machine each part has a distinctive character, a place and function of its own. Yet who will hesitate to pronounce which of the two unities is the deeper—the unity of mere sameness or juxtaposition, or the unity of parts each of which is necessary to the others, the unity of a common idea or design running through the whole and making every part necessary to every other?

But there are deeper unities than this. A living organism is, like the machine, a unity of parts each of which fulfils a separate function necessary to the rest. The various members and organs of the living body have absolutely no separate existence; each lives in and through the rest, their life its life, its life not its own but theirs, ever flowing into them, and returning enriched upon itself. But more than that, in this case there is the new element of feeling, of sensibility, of common experience and reciprocity of pleasure and pain; so that each member suffers in the injury, is happy in the happiness and well-being of the rest, and each member attains to the fullest, richest development in

surrendering itself to the unity in which it is comprehended.¹

Once more, there is a unity of which it is still more profoundly true than of mechanism and organic life, that it involves, not the suppression but the realization of the individualities which compose it—the unity of spiritual self-conscious beings in their relation to each other. For when we rise to the realm of consciousness we enter on a domain of which the unity of organic life is only the imperfect type. On the one hand, we are confronted here by that isolated, inviolable individuality of which I have spoken, that separate, solitary self-identity, which makes each human spirit, for good or ill, the bearer of its own burden; and yet, on the other hand, it may be shown that this is not the last word in the account of the spiritual nature and life of man. The conception of a solitary individualistic unity gives place to the higher conception that no man liveth to himself, that the highest life of the individual can be realized only by taking the life of others into and blending it with his own; and lastly, and above all, that the perfect life of humanity can never be reached till our separate individual life is surrendered to the

¹ Cf. Vol. I., p. 59 *seq.*

universal and infinite life, and by dying to self we begin to live in the eternal life of God.

There is, as I said in a former lecture, a sense in which it may be said of every living intelligence that it is not one, but two ; that there is a second self, in and through which alone it can know and be itself. Locked up in its mere abstract unity, it is only a blank potentiality of intellectual and moral existence ; it needs another, an objective, external self, in relation to which only can it find or realize the hidden possibilities of its nature. We grow in elevation and nobleness of nature just in proportion as we merge our own life with the life of others, or, otherwise expressed, take their life into and make it part and parcel of our own. Love, friendship, self-devotion, are never absolutely pure ; but what in their ideal purity and intensity they would mean, would be the giving up of all thought of self and its own particular interests and pleasures, the sacrifice of time, thought, ease, pleasure, personal ambition, all that most men hold dear, nay, if need be, of life itself, for the sake of others. And, in so acting, what the lover or friend would show is that the life of others has become, not merely part of his own, but more really his than his own. Further, if we

could conceive such love to be reciprocated, each carried away from all self-regarding thought and aim, each losing himself in the other's life, to find himself again, enriched, expanded, fulfilled, in a life that was not that of the one or the other, but of both,—would there not be here the breaking down of that hard, isolated selfhood which we are apt to regard as the inalienable attribute of humanity; would there not be here at least an approximation to what at first sight seems an impossible conception, the blending of two souls, two self-conscious natures in one personality, yet without any real loss—nay, with infinite gain—to the independent life of each?

But let me add, finally, it would, at most, be only an approximation. In no merely finite being can a human spirit find the perfect complement of itself. Absolute surrender to such a being, however great and noble, must always involve some loss of individuality, some limitation of the moral freedom of the individual, some narrowing or impairing of his spiritual life. To no finite being can there be that absolute self-surrender, that merging of the individual life in the life and being of another, of which we are in search. The perfect oneness of life with life, spirit with spirit, is never to be attained in

the relation of one finite being to another, but only in the relation of the finite spirit to God. Only in the union of the human with the divine can that unity which is absolute be reached. Only in union with God can I utterly lose myself and completely find myself again, perfectly surrender my isolated existence, and yet maintain and enlarge my individual life.

And the reason is that, from the very nature of the human spirit, it is only an infinite intelligence and will to which it can yield an absolute surrender. With no merely finite intelligence, with no merely finite will, is it possible for me to identify my own mind and will. However much I may desire intellectual harmony with another, I cannot surrender my own thoughts, my own convictions, my own judgment of what is true, to his, or substitute his intellectual life for my own. In so far as his convictions agree with mine, it is not because either yields himself up to the authoritative intelligence of the other, but because in common they yield themselves up to an authority, a power, that is working in both alike. I may, indeed, outwardly profess to accept the opinion which some external authority would impose on me; I may even suppress my own mental activity and cease to think

at all on the subjects on which we differ ; but the result would not be intellectual harmony, the latent disharmony would still exist ; and the suppression of individual thought, the borrowed conviction, instead of enriching and expanding, would starve and impoverish my own intellectual life.

The same thing is true of the moral life. I cannot by any voluntary determination take up the moral life of another and pass it over into my own. His ideas of duty, his desires, affections, volitions, the moral character which is the result of his past actions, are incapable, by any immediate process of transference, of becoming mine. I cannot put his will into mine or mine into his. If he be a better or a worse man than I, there is no moral harmony. If we are at the same moral level, alike in spirit, disposition, aims, activities, however close the union created by sympathetic feelings and acts, however great the benefit accruing from mutual example and imitation, there is still no identity, no bridging of the gulf that separates each individual life, in its moral history and responsibility, from every other. And here again the coincidence, in so far as it obtains, arises from the deference, which each renders to a moral authority that is common to, but infinitely higher than, both.

But that which is impossible in the relation of man to man, of the finite to the finite, is possible in the relation of man to God, of the finite spirit to the infinite. That absolute surrender of thought and will which no man can yield to another, it is the supreme ideal of man's intellectual and moral nature to be capable of yielding to God. We cannot, I have said, take up and transfer to ourselves the convictions and beliefs, the affections and volitions, the intellectual and moral life, of any other finite being ; but it is the very glory of our nature to surrender our intelligence to the Infinite Wisdom, our will to the All-perfect Will : to abandon all opinions, to suppress every volition that pertains to us as mere individuals, and to let the infinite and eternal life flow into and dominate our whole life and being.

Nor is this surrender simply the submission of our thought and will to a higher or absolute external authority. If that were all, if the spiritual life consisted simply in obedience to the absolute mind and will of an Almighty Ruler, it would fall far short of the perfect union of the finite with the Infinite. Truth and duty would still have for me the aspect of a foreign thing, a law which I respect and obey, but which is still outside

of me, and in conforming to which I would still be conscious of a self which is distinct from it, though overborne and repressed.

But there is a union with God which is deeper far than this. It is possible to attain, and then only have we reached the perfection of our being when we have attained, to a spiritual life in which the very mind and will of God become identified with our own, in which it is God's thoughts our mind thinks, God's will that worketh in us, the very life of God in which we participate. When eternal truth discloses itself to the mind, it dissipates all mere individual opinion, it subjugates thought with an absolute, irresistible authority ; but it is not an authority which is external to me, but one which utters itself in and through my own mind, and which I recognize as at once a divine authority and that of my own reason or intelligence. And then only have I attained to the true knowledge of divine things when the voice that speaks *to* me is at the same time that which speaks *in* me ; and there are not two concurrent voices, that of a finite and that of an infinite mind, but only one indivisible voice of eternal reason sounding through the inmost depth of the soul of man.

When, again, the imperative of duty utters itself to a human spirit, it is with an authority to which

the human will is constrained to bow. But then only have I attained to a real moral and spiritual life, when I have come to recognize the law of righteousness as prescribed, not merely to me but in me, not by an external authority, but by an authority which is wrought into and is one with the very essence of my own nature ; when, in the very inmost utterance of my own spirit, I listen to a divine teacher ; when the dictates of conscience not merely echo but are the voice of the living God, and in yielding myself up to their dominion, it is not two wills but one will, at once human and divine, that reigns within me.

Nor does this identification involve any pantheistic obliteration of human freedom and individuality. For whilst, in one sense, we surrender the life of self and every thought and volition that is merely that of this particular self, yet that to which we thus surrender ourselves is in reality our own truer self, that in conformity with which we rise to and realize the ideal perfection of our own nature. It is not the extinction, but the development and perfection, of any individual intelligence, that it yields itself up to absolute truth. It is not the annihilation, but the highest freedom, of any individual will, that it throws off

the yoke of selfish desires, and consciously and voluntarily yields itself to that which is not only the law of God, but the law of its own being. Absolute identity of our mind and will with the divine mind and will, could we attain to it, would not be a state of things in which our conscious life would be extinguished, but in which it would rise into perfect life and freedom.

It is true, indeed, that the union with God, which I have now described, is for the best and holiest of men only a faint and imperfect approximation, and that, as we believe, only once in the ages has it been presented to us as a full and perfect reality. The union of the human with the divine in the person and life of Christ does, indeed, according to the Christian conception of it, include an element which differentiates it from the spiritual life and experience of all other men. In the life of Christ there is the manifestation of a principle which was not a birth of time, but which had its source and origin in the eternal being and life of God, and which He Himself is represented as describing as the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.¹ Nevertheless, whatever else the union with God in

¹ Cf. Vol. I., p. 75 *seq.*

the person and life of Christ contained, it did contain that absolute identification of the human mind and will with the mind and will of God of which I have spoken. For the best and holiest of other men this union with God is only, as I have said, intermittent and partial: a broken, fitful, imperfect thing, an ideal, a dream of perfection, of which their most exalted moral and spiritual experience, in moments few and far between, is only a faint and transient realization. If we might compare it to what takes place in another and different sphere, may we not say that, in the realm of art, it is not always and continuously that the mind of the man of genius realizes the presence and power of the ideal, feels his soul glowing with the ecstasy of creative intuition? The greatest artists have their long lapses of uninspired experience, and are profoundly conscious that even when the vision comes, their efforts to realize it fall immeasurably short of an ideal which itself is only half-revealed and half-concealed.

So, in like manner, amidst the limitations of our earthly life, in the atmosphere of worldly interest and passion, amidst the perturbations of the life of sense, there is for the saintliest of men much to interrupt the consciousness of the presence of

God within them, and to arrest the flow of that current of thought and feeling which unites the life of man to the life of God. In the struggle with their lower self they are conscious of boundless possibilities which are only feebly and fitfully realized, of hopes and aspirations to which, even when the will to realize them is present, the results in the actual life are miserably disproportionate. Nevertheless, the ideal divine-human life is not a mere dream of the pious imagination. It is not merely theoretically, as a matter of speculation, that we can conceive of the absolute union of the human and divine, nor is the splendour of spiritual greatness, hid under this vesture of decay, only at best a dim forecast or far-off prevision. It is the very central fact of our Christian faith that once for all it has been realized, and that in the person and life of Christ we can recognize a nature from which every dividing, disturbing element has passed away—a mind that was the pure medium of Infinite Intelligence, a heart that throbbed in perfect unison with the Infinite Love, a will that never vibrated by one faintest aberration from the Infinite Will, a human consciousness possessed and suffused by the very spirit and life of the Living God.

LECTURE XVI.

THE IDEA OF THE ATONEMENT.

I. THE THEORY OF ANSELM.

MANY of the errors into which theological controversialists have been betrayed may be traced to the tendency to deal with figures and metaphors as exact equivalents for spiritual realities. Ordinary thinking, even in the domain of spiritual or supernatural truth, consists in a great measure of generalized images, anthropomorphic conceptions, symbols for thought derived from the outward, phenomenal world, and charged more or less with the characteristics of their sensuous origin. And though the religious mind in a certain instinctive and unconscious way rises above the poverty of the medium it employs, so as to derive or distil from it much genuine knowledge, yet the medium, considered in itself, is not an adequate organ of

spiritual ideas, and when treated as such leads to illusion and error. In our scientific or speculative inquiries we are seldom completely emancipated from the tendency to substitute illustration for argument, description for definition, pictorial images addressed to the imagination for pure ideas grasped by the reason. We are thus ever in danger of carrying the conditions that are applicable only to the sensuous form in which all language is steeped, into the sphere of purely spiritual things, and so, of ascribing to the latter the relations and limitations that pertain only to the things of sense and sight. Our solutions of spiritual problems have thus not seldom a superficial and unreal clearness, and the conclusions we seem to reach are gained by mistaking rhetorical suggestion for rational deduction.

Of this tendency, and the erroneous results to which it leads, many examples are to be found in our theological inquiries and controversies, and in none more remarkably than in the history of the doctrine before us, the doctrine of the Atonement.

The Bible is not a book of scientific theology. The religious instruction which it conveys to us, as it is intended for all, is conveyed in a form which

is intelligible to all,—not, that is, in the form of logical propositions and deductions, of abstract theological principles accurately defined and woven into systematic coherence by the logical understanding, but rather, for the most part, in the form of historical and biographical narrative, of ideas couched in familiar language, of symbols, analogies, material images derived from the realm of nature and from the relations, incidents, experiences of ordinary life. It furnishes thus a rich treasure of knowledge appealing to the intuitions and emotions of the religious mind, and feeding with divine nutriment the energies of our moral and spiritual nature. But it is obvious that much of its language with reference to God and His relations to us, whilst profitable for spiritual instruction, cannot be construed literally or taken as an immediate repertory of theological doctrine. When, as I have elsewhere said, we read of a Divine Being who has eyes to behold the righteous, who cares to listen to their prayer, to whom the smell of incense or the savour of sacrifice is sweet; when He is represented as working, being fatigued, taking rest, or, again, of His anger being kindled and abating, of His repenting of former acts or intentions, of His being induced by persuasion or

interposition to change His plans and purposes ;— in these and similar instances, though the representation conveys an impression which for the spiritual mind is of the nature of knowledge, it is obvious that it cannot be taken as, literally construed, an exact expression of religious truth.

The same remarks apply to the doctrine before us. The informal language of Scripture, with regard to the relation of the actions and sufferings of Christ to the salvation of men, has been made the basis of elaborate theories of the Atonement. Figurative expressions, such as “ransom,” “debt,” “cleansing or washing from sin,” “remission of penalty,” have been treated as literal equivalents for spiritual truth, without considering that these figures are various and sometimes inconsistent with each other. They bring before us manifold aspects of the work of redemption, and awaken in the way of suggestion or analogy ideas concerning it which are profoundly true. But if we take any one of these figures and deal with it as we would with a logical definition, the result cannot fail to be erroneous and illusory.

Before, therefore, attempting to treat of the Atonement in its positive aspect, it may be useful to

adduce one or two examples of the errors into which theologians on this subject have been betrayed by basing their theories on figurative or metaphorical conceptions, which, at best, are only partial and analogical representations of spiritual truth. The most important of the cases in point are perhaps these three: theories which are based either on *Commercial*, or on *Forensic*, or on *Sacrificial* analogies; theories, in other words, in which the work, and especially the sufferings and death of Christ, are regarded as corresponding to the payment of a debt, or to the enduring of penalty exacted for transgression in a criminal court, or to the sacrificial death of a victim in expiation of the sins of the offerer.

The theory of Anselm in his *Cur Deus Homo* is, if not the first, yet the most serious attempt to give speculative grounding to the relation between the obedience and sufferings of Christ and the remission of sins. Neither in its principle nor in its details can it be said to have survived to modern times, but indirectly it has had and continues to have much influence on theological speculation. The hinge on which it turns is the conception of the Atonement as the payment by the God-man of a debt to the divine honour, which sin has

contracted. The will of every rational creature ought to be absolutely subjected to the will of God. Whoever, therefore, gives not to God this honour withholds or withdraws what is due to Him. Nor is this tribute of the nature of a mere private or personal debt, which by an arbitrary act of clemency could be remitted; for the nature of God is identified with absolute righteousness, and His personality cannot be thought of apart from that nature. He can never, therefore, by an act of will, remit any demand which absolute righteousness does not remit. The moral glory of God would be tarnished, if He pardoned sin without receiving an adequate compensation for human disobedience.

Now, this compensation must be rendered by man, for the satisfaction must be rendered by the very being by whom the offence has been committed; and yet no mere man can render it, in the first place, because the debt is practically infinite. This Anselm curiously infers from the consideration that it were better the universe should fall into ruin than the least act should be done against the will of God; the offer of the whole universe, could it be made to Him, would be no adequate compensation for a single sinful act. He,

therefore, who would give satisfaction for sin must be able to offer to God something greater than the whole created universe. That no ordinary man can give satisfaction for sin is further proved by the consideration that man, regarded as a creature, still more as an imperfect and sinful creature, has nothing to offer to God. The highest exercise of human power, the noblest sacrifice or service, is no more than is due to God. Humanity can achieve no fund of superfluous or supererogatory merit with which to meet its past defalcations. Moreover, even if it were possible by extraordinary merit to cancel the debt due for past transgressions, the sinful nature of man, instead of diminishing, is ever increasing the debt of sin. It follows, therefore, that if satisfaction is ever to be made for sin, it must be made by one who is able to offer to God something that is not already due to Him—as all goodness is due from the creature to the Creator—by one whose untainted perfection implies the absence of any demand for compensation on his own account, and also by one who can offer to God something that transcends in value the whole finite universe.

The obedience and death of Christ fulfils these conditions. It is an obedience rendered by man,

yet rendered also by one who is sinless and has no personal guilt to cancel, by one who is above law and has no personal obligations to meet. It is an obedience, therefore, which, on His part, is purely gratuitous, and may be set down to our account as an equivalent for the debt contracted by sin. Finally, it is an obedience which has in it, as rendered by one who is Himself the Creator of the universe, what is more valuable than the whole created universe ; it is, in other words, of infinite value.

I conclude, in Anselm's own words, the account of this strange commercial view of the moral order in which we live: "You will not think it right that He who can freely surrender to God such a gift should go unrewarded. . . . But what can be given to Him as a reward which He does not already possess? Before the performing of this great act, all that the Father had was His, nor is there any obligation due by Him which could be cancelled. . . . Shall the Son therefore appear to have done so great a work in vain? To some other surely must that reward be paid which He cannot personally receive. . . . To whom more fitly shall He transfer the fruit of His death than to those for whose salvation He became

man? . . . Or whom shall He more justly make heirs of what is due to Him and what He needs not for Himself, than His brothers whom He beholds laden with so many and great debts and languishing in the depths of wretchedness? . . . Thus the mercy of God, which seemed to be sacrificed to His justice, we find to be perfectly accordant with it. For what can be thought of as more merciful than that the Father should thus accost the sinner condemned to eternal torments and incapable of redeeming himself: 'Take My only begotten and give Him for thyself,' and that the Son should say: 'Take Me and ransom thyself'? What more just than that He should cancel the debt, who receives a payment far exceeding the debt?"¹

The main criticism to be made on this theory is, as I have said, that it is an attempt to extract, from what is merely a figure or metaphor, the solution of a moral and spiritual problem; or, in other words, to exhibit moral and spiritual relations under forms of expression which do not adequately represent them.

It is no doubt true that, taken simply as a pictorial representation, there are points of view from

¹ *Cur Deus Homo?* II. 19-20.

which the position of the insolvent debtor vividly represents that of the sinner. We may say of the latter, for instance, that he is one who has squandered a wealth more precious than any material possessions : one who has wasted on the world and the things of the world capacities which no finite object can satisfy, and who at the end of life, if not before, finds himself confronted by obligations unfulfilled, and bankrupt of all true happiness. Or, again, we may say that the debtor's embarrassments are a graphic picture of the burden which a sense of guilt imposes on the soul, that has become awakened to its moral condition before God.

When a man becomes deeply and inextricably involved in debt, his condition is one of deplorable incapacity and impotence. Debt acts like a dead-weight on his energies. He who rises day by day to the consciousness of obligations he cannot meet, and from which he sees no possibility of extricating himself, not seldom loses all elasticity of mind. He has no heart to enter on any new work or enterprise. The stimulus to exertion is gone. Unable, do what he may, to retrieve the past, he perhaps resigns himself with dull hopelessness to his lot ; or even, feeling that he cannot make things better, he becomes careless how much he makes them

worse. What he needs, in order to rouse him to effort, is that he should be absolved of his connection with the past; that the accumulated load of obligation should be swept away, and it should be made possible for him to have a fair start in life again.

And, in like manner, conscious guilt hangs upon the awakened spirit, and clogs its moral energies. Of what avail is any new attempt at amendment, so long as the record of neglected duty and unfulfilled obligation confronts it? The utmost exertion is insufficient to meet the demands of the present day, not to speak of wiping off old scores of guilt. The burden on the conscience, do what the man may, becomes only heavier and heavier. If he could but begin anew, if, freed from the miserable past, he could enter on a new life, with all the elasticity of innocence, then all might yet be well. But no earthly power can effect such a discharge, or dis sever the soul from its terrible responsibility for the debt of sin.

But whilst thus, in a figurative or suggestive way, the moral relations of man to God may be represented by the relation of the debtor to the creditor, the former are infinitely more comprehensive than the latter—they involve problems

which a financial analogy cannot solve, and the attempt so to solve them can only lead to misconception and error.

(i.) In the first place, moral obligations are only imperfectly represented by the notion of debt. The very principle of goodness, and therefore of sin, is left out when we so represent them. The owner of money or of property is, of course, made poorer by giving it away, richer by retaining or withholding it from another. But it is of the very essence of our relation, as spiritual beings, to God, that we gain by what we lose or surrender, and that we are truly impoverished by what we keep. We are not our own. All that we have, all that we are—our capacities, talents, opportunities, our very life and being—are not ours to use at will ; nor have we any right for a single moment so to use them. But the man who devotes himself to the service of Infinite Goodness, who lives a life of self-sacrifice for the good of humanity or the glory of God, is no loser thereby ; in the enriching, expanding, elevating of his nature, in the touching of the springs of thought and feeling, in the hidden sweetness of a life of self-forgetful, self-denying love, he regains a thousand-fold all he gives. On the other hand, the man who, by an unholy or

sinful life, can be represented as defrauding God of His due, still more defrauds himself. What he refuses to surrender he does not retain. In the attempt to grasp all he loses all. Moral goodness, in short, is not the paying of a debt, but it is love or self-devotion; and love loses its essence so long as it is felt to be merely something due to God. To be figured as a debt, goodness must be something that can be paid by us or for us, and with the payment of which the creditor must be satisfied. But love is a debt that is immeasurable, a debt with the payment of which neither the giver nor the receiver can ever be satisfied.

(ii.) And this leads us to another consideration, namely, that debts are in their nature transferable, but moral obligations are not. A debt may be discharged for us by another, and the creditor must be satisfied whoever pays it; but moral obligations can only be fulfilled by the agents in person, nor can any payment by another affect the force of the original claim. There is a sense, indeed, as we shall see, in which through union with Christ we become partakers of His obedience and sufferings; but no mere external transference can, from the nature of the thing, achieve this result. There are

many burdens which others may bear for us, but this is a case in which "every man shall bear his own burden." Toil, pain, penury, sorrow, may be, and are daily, borne by some that others may not know what it is to bear them. And even when such burdens cannot be outwardly transferred, we know how the sense of human sympathy has a wonderful power to make our burden lighter. Even moral disaster and conscious guilt are not beyond alleviation, if there is a love which infamy and shame has not been able to alienate. But there is a point beyond which human sympathy cannot go. However closely another may implicate himself with us, it is nevertheless true that, beyond our relations to others, to each of us, as, spiritual, self-conscious being, there has been given an incommunicable individuality, a moral career to make or mar, each for himself alone. Your goodness or guilt in this literal sense can never become mine, nor mine yours. In my sin you may grieve for me; my misery and guilt may blight the happiness of those who are implicated with my life; but you can no more be literally innocent or guilty for me than by eating you can satisfy my hunger, or by suffering remove my disease or pain. Sin, therefore, cannot be adequately represented as a debt, inasmuch as,

unlike debt, it can be paid only by him who has contracted it.

(iii.) Once more, according to the principle of this theory, there is no need for any moral relation to Christ in order to our receiving the benefit of His atoning work. Whatever view we take of the nature of the Atonement and its relation to the remission of sin, I suppose most theologians, even those who reject the purely moral theory—the theory that its sole end is the subjective moral influence which it exerts on the mind and heart of the transgressor—would admit that Christ's atoning work does not secure the salvation of man apart from any moral relation of the sinner to the Saviour. If there be no salvation apart from goodness, if God cannot look with complacency on the impenitent and unbelieving, whatever Christ's redeeming work has accomplished for us, the benefit of it cannot be communicated to those who remain in moral estrangement and unbelief; and the reception of that benefit implies as its necessary condition—call it faith, trust, self-surrender, or by whatever name you will—a moral and spiritual act, a new moral and spiritual attitude or relation to Christ. But under the theory before us no such moral or subjective relation to Christ is needed. When payment

is made by another on a debtor's behalf, nothing more on his part is necessary to complete the transaction. The whole process of clearing off is accomplished outside of him. No prior or present moral or spiritual connection with the benefactor is required in order to the debtor's getting full advantage of the payment. Suppose the debtor knew nothing about the payer, or knowing, regarded him with indifference or even with dislike, the money paid would still suffice to discharge the debt, as much as if it were paid by his dearest friend. If, as is likely, he does feel gratitude to the benefactor, the moral emotion, however commendable, does nothing to complete the transaction or to enable him to benefit by it. Such gratitude, indeed, presupposes the benefit as already received and adds nothing to the right to receive it.

Lastly, the artificial and untenable character of Anselm's theory is nowhere more obvious than in the concluding part of it, in which he deals with the relation of Christ's sufferings and death to the salvation of mankind. That salvation is achieved, according to him, by the transference of Christ's merits, or of the reward to which, by His meritorious obedience, He is entitled, to "His brethren and kinsmen," "whom," to use Anselm's own words, "He

beholds laden with so many and great debts and languishing in the depths of wretchedness." But it is not to the whole life and obedience of Christ that this quality of meritoriousness pertains. Perfect obedience is no more than is due to God by every moral agent, therefore it does not possess that quality of merit which belongs only to what transcends strict moral obligation. But that quality does pertain to Christ's suffering and death, inasmuch as these are the penalty of sin, and are not exigible from one who is, by supposition, sinless. On the part, therefore, of the sinless, all-perfect man, submission to suffering and death is a thing in virtue of which, as it passes wholly beyond the region of strict obligation and is purely gratuitous and voluntary, He becomes entitled to the reward of what is absolutely meritorious.

Now, apart from other objections, the notion of superfluous goodness, of the moral desert of actions exceeding the limits of strict obligation, is obviously irrational and untenable. It proceeds on the assumption that, beyond that measure of obedience to the moral law which is required of all men, there are actions which are in excess of duty, and which demand an extraordinary reward. How-

ever much they may move us to admiration by their heroic and saintly elevation, they are more than is necessary to satisfy our normal obligations. Though great souls may achieve them, they imply a self-abnegation, a moral enthusiasm, a superiority to ordinary motives, with which the great majority of men are not endowed. As they are more than moral law requires, we may conceive of such actions—as in the Catholic doctrine of the supererogatory merits of the saints—as accumulating a capital of merit, or creating a title to reward in this world or the next which, inasmuch as it exceeds what is required of any individual man, may be carried over to the account of those who can plead no merit of their own. And if this be true as regards the merits of saints, heroes, martyrs, may it not be maintained to be pre-eminently true of Him whose goodness reaches the height of supreme, absolute, unapproachable moral elevation?

But, as I have said, this distinction between actions of strict obligation and actions of extraordinary or supererogatory merit is a purely fictitious one. From one point of view, all moral acts, even those of the most exalted self-devotion, and the most heroic self-sacrifice, are, for him who per-

forms them, of strict obligation. For, to live a good or holy life, is to live a life in accordance with the moral ideal as it reveals itself to the human spirit; and the revelation of the moral ideal is never complete. It rises with every past attainment. It is never exhausted and never satisfied. The very best and noblest of men would repudiate the notion that their life has been holier and better than it reasonably or safely might have been. In all the future of their life, here or hereafter, that which is, will still be distinguished from that which ought to be; and the lustre of the saintliest human life must grow pale or vanish in the sight of one whose eye is fixed on the far-off vision of the Absolute Ideal. If it be urged, with Anselm, that submission to death, which is the wages of sin, could never be obligatory in the case of one who is perfectly sinless, is not the answer that death, when we are called to meet it in the discharge of duty, is no merely gratuitous act, or one which a noble nature would feel less bound to perform than any other? It is not because death is due from him as a sinner that the hero or martyr dies, but because truth, goodness, fidelity to conscience, demand that he should surrender all, even life itself, rather than be disloyal to them.

And so, even in the sacrifice of the Cross there is, from one point of view, no surplus of merit. If Christ's death be, as Anselm represents it, a tribute to the infringed or wounded honour of God, in virtue of which His arrested grace and mercy may flow forth to fallen and guilty man, can it be regarded as an act of superfluous or gratuitous merit, and not rather, for Christ, as an act of the highest moral necessity ?

Let me add, in conclusion, on this point, that the conception of the salvation of men as a reward of Christ's righteousness, or as a boon arbitrarily conferred on men apart from any moral and spiritual relation to Christ, is an obviously erroneous one. The blessedness that flows from goodness or righteousness, it is a truism to say, is inseparable from goodness or righteousness itself. We cannot share in the blessed results of Christ's obedience unto death without in some way sharing in the essence and spirit of that obedience. If salvation consisted in outward and material benefits, in escape from outward and physical calamities and the enjoyment of outward and physical happiness, then it could be bestowed on its recipients wholly irrespective of moral and spiritual character, and by a mere act of favour on the part of the

donor. But it is not so with the blessings which constitute the Christian salvation. The peace of purity, the tranquillity of a holy mind, the happiness of conscious reconciliation and fellowship with God, the joy of being and doing good, the sense of divine favour welling up within the soul as a perennial spring of blessedness which pain and sorrow and death itself can never affect,—these things constitute the highest and, in one sense, the only reward of righteousness; and it is a reward which not even Omnipotence could bestow on the unrighteous or unholy mind. If the essence of religion be love to God, the surrender of the soul to the infinite goodness, the fellowship of the human spirit with the divine, then, whatever other or ulterior benefits may flow from it, it is its own end and aim, and to make anything else its reward is to vitiate and destroy its very essence; nor can even we have entered on the true sphere of religion until we know and feel it to be so.

Even human love, as we see at once, would be rendered spurious and corrupt by the intrusion of any regard to ulterior advantages. "What am I to gain by all this expenditure of affection? Why should I repair to the presence and reciprocate the affection of those

who are dear to me? What return shall accrue to me from all this self-sacrifice, this squandering of personal ease and enjoyment for the sake of others?" Would not the instant reply to such questions be—"Gain, result, reward? I think of none, desire none. The only reward of love is its own presence in the heart, and it would be an imputation on its purity and reality to think of any other." And so is it with that higher, sublimer love which is of the very essence of the spiritual life, that mingled awe and tenderness, reverence and devotion, aspiration and self-surrender, which human hearts are capable of feeling towards the Father of Spirits, the Lord and Redeemer of the soul. To hearts once touched by it, it is as much its own end and satisfaction as light and beauty and harmony are the satisfaction, the immediate joy and delight, of eye and ear, of sense and soul. And so when we turn to the person and work of Christ, the highest blessing which He has procured for us is simply participation in that life of love of which His whole earthly history was the manifestation.

LECTURE XVII.

THE IDEA OF THE ATONEMENT.

2. THE SUBSTITUTIONARY THEORY.

I POINTED out in the last lecture that many of the errors in the doctrine of the Atonement into which theological theorists have been betrayed may be traced to the tendency to treat metaphors as exact equivalents for thought. In theology, as in philosophy, we seldom escape the error of substituting illustration for argument, description for definition, the pictures for thoughts. In the informal language of Scripture, the obedience and sufferings of Christ and their relation to the salvation of men are presented to us under a variety of images, such as ransom or redemption from bondage, the payment of a debt and release of the debtor from pecuniary obligations, the substitutionary sacrifices of victims in heathen and

Jewish ritual, the deliverance of a condemned culprit from the sentence of a court of justice. These figures bring before us the atoning work of Christ in various aspects, each of which can be only a partial and analogical representation of spiritual truth. But in the history of doctrine they have often been otherwise treated, and from this cause, as I have said, have arisen many of the errors and inconsistencies into which controversialists have been betrayed. I endeavoured in the last lecture to illustrate this observation by a review of the well-known theory of Anselm, which attempts to treat the atonement under the figure of the payment of a debt.

Another, and perhaps still more important, case in point is that which is furnished by forensic theories, in which the atoning work, and especially the sufferings and death of Christ, are represented as analogous to the penalty inflicted on offences against human law in a court of justice. In this case the difficulties connected with the doctrine become much more formidable than when it is treated under a commercial analogy. A debt the creditor may forego or wipe out by a simple act of will; but a lawgiver or judge may not by a mere act of clemency forego the penalty due to

a criminal offence, or, at least, he can do so only by outraging the principle of justice which he represents. Debt, again, is transferable, but guilt is not; the creditor must be satisfied with payment, whether by the debtor or by another on his behalf; but moral obligations can be fulfilled only in person, and neither guilt nor the punishment it deserves can be transferred to another. The satisfaction of justice is a satisfaction which absolutely and unalterably distinguishes between the innocent and the guilty, and is achieved only when the penalty of transgression falls on the latter.

In considering, therefore, the theory which bases the Atonement on the notion of the satisfaction of justice, two questions present themselves:

First, Is there an Absolute Justice which precludes the forgiveness of sin until it obtain satisfaction by punishment?

And, secondly, Is there any sense in which this satisfaction to Justice can be rendered by an innocent person on behalf of the guilty?

The argument of those who base their theory of the Atonement on the idea of Absolute Justice is somewhat to the following effect. It is of the very essence of sin that it involves the idea of guilt

or desert of punishment. A moral offence is an offence, not against any individual, private personality, but against the eternal law of Right, or the Being whose nature is identified with it. It cannot therefore be cancelled by any arbitrary act of forgiveness. An injured person may by a mere act of clemency forgive the bitterest wrong done to himself individually; he may forego all acts of retaliation or demands for reparation; he may even re-admit the offender to his good graces. But there is a part of the offence which it lies wholly beyond his power to remit. So far as it is a moral wrong—an act that not merely does hurt or damage to a fellow man, but transgresses the eternal law of righteousness, which transcends all private interests, asserts its supremacy over all individual wills, and is the principle whereon the very existence and stability of the moral order of the universe is based—this and the punishment due to it, no individual by an act of arbitrary clemency can remit or cancel. Even human laws, imperfect as they are, make plain to us this distinction between private offences and offences against retributive justice. If we suppose the representative of the authority of law to be related to a convicted culprit by the tenderest bonds of kinship or per-

sonal affection—to be, say, at once his father and his judge—however much he may shrink from the sacrifice, however eager he may be to save the criminal from the consequences of his misdeeds, he cannot, without an abuse of his office, refrain from pronouncing the sentence and exacting the penalty which the law demands. Hence all objections to the theory of penal justice, which are based on the beauty of forgiveness in the relations of man to man, are irrelevant and futile.

It is, indeed, often urged that such a view of divine justice is over-strained and unreal. Can that virtue, it is asked, which is praiseworthy in man, be impossible in God? Can we regard that quelling of personal exasperation and enmity, that foregoing of vengeance or that forgiveness of wrong and readiness to show kindness to our bitterest foe—can we regard an attitude of mind which touches the supreme height of goodness in a human being, as altogether foreign to the nature of the infinitely good and gracious Father of Spirits? And, on the other hand, can we ascribe to God a relentless insistence on punishment, a refusal to forgive till the offence has been wiped out by suffering, which would indicate moral hardness and implacability in a fellow man?

But to all this, it is maintained, there is a sufficient answer. Sin is not to be conceived of as a personal affront to a Divine Person. Moral wrong is not simply a disturbance of the relations between man and God, regarded merely as an Almighty Personality. Moral right and wrong are not created by any personal will, nor can any such will abrogate the guilt of the wrong-doer. The pardon which it is impossible for me as an individual to grant, it is equally impossible for God, conceived of as an individual, to bestow. If He could, the eternal Law of Right which, after He had pronounced remission, still persists in condemning, would be greater than He. But the truth is that God has no personality apart from moral right. He is the very impersonation of justice and righteousness; and what justice and righteousness demand, *that* the Being whose essence is identified with them can never cease to demand. If, therefore, even at a human tribunal a just judge is debarred from indulging personal tenderness at the expense of justice, much more is the Infinite Moral Ruler of the universe debarred by His own essential nature from the false clemency which would let the sinner be forgiven before justice has been satisfied by the punishment of his sin.

Such, briefly stated, is the fundamental principle of the theory which bases the Atonement on the necessity for the satisfaction of justice. Let us briefly inquire how far it is tenable, how far the notion of a necessity for the satisfaction of justice by punishment is a defensible one.

Now obviously, in the first place, we must concede, that the satisfaction of justice is to be distinguished from vindictiveness—the satisfaction which arises from gratified personal revenge. There is, as we all know, a malign pleasure of which vindictive passion is susceptible, in inflicting or witnessing the infliction of pain or suffering on the man who has done us wrong. Stronger, often, than any other desire is the craving for vengeance, and keener than any other pleasure the unhallowed delight which the gratification of this passion brings. There have even been states of society in which the retaliative impulse has been invested with a spurious consecration, and in which, the more remorselessly a man pursued a personal or family feud to the bitter end, so much the more did other men respect and honour him. Obviously, however, the satisfaction of justice which is held to be the necessary condition of forgiveness, can have nothing in common

with the satisfaction of vindictive feeling. Not only is this not a feeling sanctioned by morality, but it is a feeling the restraining or quelling of which is recognized by Christian morality as one of the highest virtues.

Is, then, the satisfaction of Divine Justice which, according to this theory, is the indispensable condition of forgiveness, analogous, if not in any way to individual vindictiveness, yet to that satisfaction which human criminal law finds in the detection and punishment of crime? In an ordered and civilized society the penalty of detected crime is inevitable. Whether legal punishment be regarded as retributive or deterrent—whether, in other words, we find its explanation simply in the righteous reaction of injured society against the injurer, or in the necessity of its self-protection by threatened pains and penalties—in any case, justice can never be satisfied to forego the loss or suffering which is the penalty of crime. Nor is there anything harsh or cruel in this insistence on the infliction of penalty, or in the voice of public opinion which sanctions it. The resentment against evil and evil-doers which supports legal condemnation, and insists upon the execution of legal penalties, or of those social penalties which attend offences the law

cannot reach, is a resentment which we are not called to stifle, but rather to cherish and strengthen, in the individual mind and in the heart of the community; nor is the demand for retribution and redress a demand that is unjustifiable or ignoble.

Is this, then, a satisfaction which we can conceive of Divine Justice as demanding? Can we think of God as the Supreme Judge making endurance of penal suffering the indispensable condition of forgiveness? Now there is, no doubt, a sense in which the satisfaction which arises from the punishment of crime is predicable of divine as well as human jurisprudence. But it may be maintained that, whilst this is the *only* satisfaction possible to human justice, there is another and higher satisfaction possible to divine justice. The only atonement for crime, the only reparation for infringement of law, of which human jurisprudence can take cognizance, is simply the outward atonement or reparation of pain, loss, suffering inflicted on the transgressor. By fines or imprisonment or physical inflictions, or, in the extreme case, by capital punishment, human law can make sure at least of this, that the breach of its requirements shall carry with it the forfeiture of outward happiness, or even of life itself. But human law can go

no further. It cannot penetrate to the realm of spirit, to the inner life of thought, feeling, will, and exact the higher penalty of spiritual misery, the deeper, keener torture of mental anguish for acts of disobedience. Alike in what it does exact and in what it does not and cannot exact, it falls short of the highest satisfaction of which justice is capable. Its penalties never transcend physical or material suffering; but mere pain or suffering, as such, has no moral and spiritual value. Sin is an evil which belongs to the realm of spirit, and if it can be atoned for at all, it must be by an atonement of its own order. Physical torture prolonged for ages would have in it nothing commensurate with, or that could be regarded as a set-off or compensation for, a single sinful deed.

Nor does society regard its outward inflictions as establishing a claim to forgiveness. At the expiry of a criminal's sentence it does not forgive him; it simply lets him go, exempts him from further outward penalty. The stamp of felony, the loss of caste, the irreversible suspicion, still rest upon him; and society, which can look no further than the outward life and employ no other than external sanctions, remains unreconciled and unforgiving. And he, on his part,

may be none the better for his endurance of penal misery. It may have a hardening rather than a softening influence on his spirit. He may only hate the more the social order that has made him suffer, and be as ready, or more ready than ever, to carry on the war with it and to give way to his unextirpated criminal instincts.

And so, in like manner, is it with the penalties for transgression of the divine law. Here, too, pain, as pain, possesses no atoning virtue. It has in it nothing commensurate with moral guilt; nor, though prolonged for ages, could it be regarded as obliterating that guilt, or as any, even the faintest, compensation for it. If we conceive of the punishment of sin as analogous to that of human laws, at the expiry of the sinner's sentence of incarceration or banishment to some dismal penal settlement of the universe, the moral guilt that was there at the beginning would not have vanished, would still cling to him at the end. By an arbitrary act of clemency, he might be released from longer penal endurance; but the stain of selfishness, or sensuality, or other sin that was the cause of his condemnation, would remain unobliterated and unmodified.

Are we, then, compelled to hold that what

this theory represents as the satisfaction of justice is a conception entirely devoid of meaning? Is there no sense, in which Infinite Justice can receive satisfaction from the pain or suffering of the transgressor, and in which that pain or suffering can become the condition of forgiveness? Yes, it has been answered by some thoughtful modern writers, there is a kind of suffering which, if we were capable of experiencing it in its full and exhaustive intensity, would constitute the only possible or adequate expiation for sin, the only conceivable expedient for the wiping out or annulling of a guilty past. Literally, of course, the past can never be annulled. Whatever our record has been—that of a life stained with the grosser vices, or, at best, of a life of moral poverty and neglect of duty, governed only by worldly and selfish motives and aims—its historic reality can never be obliterated, its sins can never be unsinned, nor can Infinite Justice ever come to regard them without moral condemnation and abhorrence. The only conceivable moral expunging of them would be, that we in our inmost soul should feel and respond to the divine condemnation of them, stand self-condemned at the bar of our own conscience, become alive to the misery and degradation, or

the moral poverty and meanness, of our bygone life, and with deepest shame and self-abasement, long to renounce and escape from it. And along with this shrinking and self-abasement that comes to the soul from seeing sin as God sees it, there must arise in it a profoundly painful consciousness of the loss that is implied in a life of estrangement from God, of the infinite wealth which it has squandered, the infinite blessedness it has forfeited, of the loneliness even here of a life that is without God, and of the dread darkness that gathers over its future.¹

Here then, it would seem, is a kind of suffering that, if it were only possible to us, might be supposed to possess in it an expiatory value which can never be ascribed to any outward penal infliction. It meets the demand that, for a moral and spiritual evil, a material instead of a moral and spiritual satisfaction will not suffice. As penetrating to the realm of spirit, it is a kind of suffering essentially deeper than any external and arbitrary torture; and, finally, it is a kind of suffering which prepares the soul to estimate the value of forgiveness, and without which forgiveness would be impossible.

¹ Cf. *The Nature of the Atonement*, by Dr. John M'Leod Campbell, p. 133 *seq.*

If divine forgiveness meant exemption from any outward penalty in this world or the next, it might come to us wholly irrespective of our moral and spiritual state, and could be bestowed on all alike by an arbitrary act of clemency. It would need, in order to appreciate it, no moral sensibility, no awakening of conscience, no conviction of sin. But if it mean deliverance from guilt, escape from an accusing conscience, restoration to the infinite purity and goodness, then can divine forgiveness be no indiscriminate boon bestowed on the hardened or indifferent, alike with the soul that is plunged in deepest compunction and sorrow for sin. It is only the latter, only the soul that has sorrowed with godly sorrow, become alive to the intolerable burden of guilt, felt the loathsomeness of the taint of evil, recognized in its bitter experience the justice of the divine condemnation—it is only the soul that has rendered to the Infinite Righteousness this satisfaction of *moral* suffering that can know and appreciate the blessedness of reconciliation with God. And it is only this suffering, the suffering of a soul to which sin and the consciousness of guilt is a worse evil than any outward infliction, that is the indispensable condition of forgiveness.

But here arises the great difficulty which any such view is called to meet. If a sorrow and self-condemnation adequate to the evil of sin be the condition of forgiveness, can any human being render such a satisfaction for sin to the Infinite Righteousness? To say that he must do so, is surely a doctrine of despair rather than of hope. Can any imperfect, sinful being ever look on sin with a moral condemnation equivalent to the divine condemnation of it? Is it not one inevitable effect of sin that it blunts our moral perceptions and dulls our sense of its abhorrent nature? Has any imperfect, sinful being ever looked on sin with the eye of God, or with a moral condemnation equivalent to the divine condemnation? Does not our sorrow for sin partake of the general imperfection of our moral nature, so that our very repentance needs to be repented of, and increases instead of atoning for our guilt? Is there not truth in the apparent paradox that it is only the sinless who can fully know what sin is: seeing it is he only that can measure it by the standard of moral perfection? It is for the sinful that a satisfaction or atonement is needed, yet none can render that satisfaction who is not free from personal sin; to be a sinner is to be incapable of rendering it.

The answer which has been given by those who hold this theory is, that the difficulty has been met and solved in the person and life of Christ. For here is presented to us, in one who is a partaker of our nature, that infinite sorrow for sin which is the perfect response to the divine condemnation of it. Here is one who is the living embodiment of that ideal of moral perfection by which alone can the discovery be made to the human consciousness of the moral deformity and degradation of sin ; here, too, is one, in whose pure and perfect nature the presence of sin creates a moral recoil, a pang of nameless pain and grief, such as the sinful can never experience for themselves.

But now—delaying for the present any further exposition of this theory—let me briefly indicate two objections to it which at first sight may seem to be insuperable. Is not the satisfaction for sin on which it turns, an unreal satisfaction ; and even if it were otherwise unexceptionable, can its virtue ever be transferred from the sinless to the sinful ? Is not the sorrow for sin of one who is by supposition sinless, that only of an observer, and not that of the actual perpetrator ? Can we leave out of a real

moral contrition the element of personal guilt? In order to any true satisfaction for sin, must it not be rendered by one who can feel the shame and sorrow, as shame and sorrow for his own transgression, his own disobedience and departure from goodness? A sinless being, it is true, may, in one sense, know sin more thoroughly, and appreciate more fully the disastrous consequences it involves, than the sinner himself. A morally perfect being would also be capable of a deeper moral sympathy, a love and compassion more intense than the sinful can feel for each other. But one element of moral suffering for sin which is absolutely essential to its reality, such a being could never feel, namely, conscious guilt, the sense of personal ill desert, the pain and shame we can feel only for evil deeds that have been part of our own moral record.

And, even if we suppose that all the ingredients of an adequate sorrow for sin could enter into the conscious experience of the sinless, there would remain the seemingly insuperable difficulty, involved in this, as in all other substitutionary theories, the inconceivability of the transference of merit or guilt from one moral agent to another, or of the imputation of moral character

to any other than the author of it—of innocence or righteousness to the guilty, of guilt to the innocent or righteous. However close the relations of the individual to other members of the social organism, however true it be that our social relation makes others, in a sense, a part of ourselves, there is, it would seem, a point beyond which this merging of our life in the life of others cannot go, without sacrificing that principle of individual and personal responsibility apart from which morality could not be said to exist.

In the next lecture, I shall attempt to show to what extent these difficulties can be met, and under what modifications the theory we have been considering may be regarded as at least an approximation to a true theory of the Atonement.

LECTURE XVIII.

THE IDEA OF THE ATONEMENT.

3. THE ELEMENTS OF A TRUE THEORY.

IN the last lecture I submitted to you some criticisms of the theory which bases the Atonement on the idea of the satisfaction of offended justice by penal suffering ; or, in other words, which makes the endurance of penal suffering for sin the condition of forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Without recapitulating the train of thought in which we were engaged, it may help us to gather up the results of the preceding lectures, if, looking at the subject from a slightly different point of view, we attempt in the present lecture to answer the following questions :

First, What kind of suffering for sin can we ascribe to a being by supposition sinless ?

And, secondly, Is there any sense in which the

moral benefits of the sufferings of a sinless being can be transferred to the sinful?

I. In answer to the first question, it is admitted by theologians of all schools—as indeed it must be admitted—that there are elements of suffering for sin which lie beyond the possible experience of a being incapable of any personal taint of sin. One of these, for instance, is conscious guilt. Wide as the range of human sympathy which we must ascribe to Christ, if we think of Him as morally perfect, it could never go one step beyond the limit where condemnation of sin passes into self-condemnation, loathing of moral evil into loss of self-respect, into that shame and self-reproach which is the most terrible ingredient of sin's penalty. And must we not regard as the main element of the punishment of sin, not any outward inflictions, but the inward evils that cling to it—the darkening and degradation of the moral nature, the loss of innocence, the dying out of pure affections and aspirations, and that conscious shame and self-contempt of which I have just spoken? If the punishment of sin, like the penalties for the infringement of human law, consisted simply in external or arbitrary inflictions, such as imprisonment, banishment, forfeiture of money or outward

status, or, in extreme cases, capital punishment, it is at least conceivable that an exact equivalent for the sinner's punishment might be borne by the sinless.

But there is a penalty for sin which is not arbitrary, which follows it by a law as irreversible as that of physical causation—the penalty which consists in such things as the stings of conscience, the darkening of the moral perceptions, the extinction of the light of purity in the soul, the hateful bondage of evil passion, the bitterness of remorse, the shrinking from hateful memories of the past, the vague forebodings of the unknown future. These and the like are the worst ingredient of sin's penalty, and they are those which cannot be separated from it, and which only the soul that has sinned can ever know. From all these, or the faintest participation in them, He who knew no sin was of necessity exempted.

Another element, again, of the penalty of sin which a being, by supposition sinless, could never experience, is what in Scripture language is designated "the wrath of God," in other words, a personal sense of divine disapproval. Conscious guilt, indeed, is but the inward reflexion of the divine hostility to evil, the shadow of the darkened countenance of infinite righteousness cast on the

soul; and the soul that is incapable of the former must be equally exempted from all consciousness of the latter. If Christ was not guilty, it was impossible that God should ever think Him guilty, or entertain towards Him the same disapproval or anger with which He regards the guilty. The infamy of unholy deeds could never in the eye of Infinite Wisdom fall on Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled. In one sense, as we shall see, He might identify Himself with the sin, as well as the sorrow of the world that is the fruit of sin; but even in those last scenes of His earthly history in which a world's iniquities were lying heavy on His soul, there could be no anger against Him in the mind of God.

And if there was none in reality, there could be none fictitiously assumed. Nay, it was just in the midst of His sufferings that we are permitted to think of the divine approval and complacency as, most of all, resting upon Him. In the very article of His agony He was conscious of doing the will of the Father, and of the unwavering confidence in His love; and though physical weakness might take the form of a momentary sense of loneliness and forsakenness, yet with His latest breath He is represented as com-

mitting Himself with childlike trust to the everlasting arms: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The peace of innocence, the imperturbable repose of goodness under the uneclipsed light of divine favour, were, all through life and to the close of life, ever His.

Turning now from the negative to the positive side, let us inquire whether there are any elements of the suffering which flows from sin, which a sinless or morally pure and perfect being can experience. Now, in answer to this question, let me say, in the first place, that there is a view of the sufferings of Christ which many able theologians have propounded, in virtue of which they can be regarded as penal sufferings, and as having, in relation to the sin of the world, an expiatory value. "Christ," writes one great authority on this subject, the well-known American theologian, Jonathan Edwards, "suffered the wrath of God for men's sins in such a way as He was capable of, being an infinitely holy person, who knew that God was not angry with Him personally, knew that God did not hate Him, but infinitely loved Him." He could not, therefore, suffer for sin, as the wicked hereafter will, "from the sense of God's infinite displeasure towards them."

How, then, consistently with the absence of all personal guilt, could Christ be said to have suffered the punishment of sin? The answer which Jonathan Edwards and kindred writers give is simply this, that Christ, though not a sinner, suffered the *effects* of sin. He experienced by divine appointment in His own person those penal evils which, in the case of all others, are the expression of God's moral condemnation or the penal results of their evil deeds. All physical evils, even that which is endured by the good and holy, are traceable, directly or indirectly, to moral evil as their ultimate source; and all experience of such evil is experience of the penal effects of sin. Pain, grief, toil, the sufferings that spring from the malignant passions of men, from envy, malice, hatred, cruelty, ingratitude, treachery, revenge,—evils which it is not only possible for the innocent to experience, but which fall with redoubled force upon them, just because they are innocent; and finally, that evil which is emphatically “the wages of sin,” which in anticipation hangs all through life as a dark shadow of doom on the human spirit, and from which in its awful reality no innocence can exempt any sharer of our mortal nature,—these and such as these are

the dire effects of sin and the manifestations of God's anger against it. And all these Christ could and did in His earthly history, and especially in the last tragic passage of that history, in their full and unmitigated force, endure.

And what is specially to be noted is, that it was not merely theoretically, as a spectator or observer, that Christ contemplated these evils which are the penalty of sin; but they were evils which were stamped and impressed on His consciousness till they suffused His whole breath and being, by the bitter teaching of personal experience.

Finally, it is to be added that, along with and underneath all this experience of the effects of sin, there was in the consciousness of Christ a recognition of them as in themselves the just and righteous expression of the divine condemnation of sin, a profound response to that condemnation as just and righteous.

To sum up the scope of this view of the penal character of Christ's sufferings, let me quote the words of a recent very able and thoughtful writer. "It is, I own, difficult to frame a theory to which no exception can be taken, which shall show how the sufferings of Christ, which were in large part sufferings endured for righteousness sake, had at

the same time an expiatory value ; yet it is the clear teaching of Scripture that they possess this character. As aids to the apprehension of the subject, the facts remain that these sufferings of the sinless Son of God were voluntarily undertaken, and (what can be said of no other of the race) wholly undeserved ; that Christ did enter, as far as a sinless Being could, into the penal evils of our state, and finally submitted to death—the doom which sin has brought on our humanity ; that He did this with a perfect consciousness and realization of the relation of these evils to sin ; that He experienced the full bitterness of these evils, and, especially in His last hours, was permitted to endure them without even the alleviations and spiritual comforts which many of His own people enjoy ; that there were mysterious elements in His sufferings, which outward causes do not seem adequate to explain (*e.g.* the agony in Gethsemane, the awful darkness of His soul on Calvary), which appear related to His position as our Sin-bearer ; finally, that in this mortal sorrow He still retains unbroken His relation to the Father, overcomes our spiritual enemies, so transacts with God for men, so offers Himself to God in substitutionary love on our behalf, so recognizes and

honours the justice of God in His condemnation of sin, and in the evils that were befalling Him in consequence of that sin, that His death may be fitly regarded as a satisfaction to righteousness for us.”¹

I shall not attempt any elucidation or examination of this theory, further than to say that it seems to meet the conditions of the problem which the authors of it set themselves to solve, and that it certainly gives a meaning to many passages of Scripture with reference to the sufferings and death of Christ which would be otherwise unintelligible.

There is, however, a further view of the subject which may tend to throw some additional light on the question we are now considering, namely, whether there are any elements of the suffering which flows from sin which a morally pure and sinless being can experience. And, in answer to this question, we return to certain considerations which have already been in part suggested. Not only can a good man suffer for sin, but it may be laid down as a principle that he will suffer for it in proportion to his goodness. Not only can the sinless suffer for sin, but there are sufferings for sin which only

¹ *The Christian View of God and the World*, by Professor James Orr, p. 362.

he who is himself sinless can in the fullest measure undergo. It was possible for Him who knew no sin to bear on His soul a burden of humiliation, shame, sorrow, for our sins, which in one aspect of it was more profound and intense than we could ever feel for ourselves. Consider how far, to a very pure and holy nature, and one which is at the same time intensely loving and benignant, the sins of those who are dear to him may become a moral burden almost equivalent to his own. Let us conceive for a moment what the feeling of such an one would be, if he learned that one related to him by the ties of kindred and home, and with whose welfare his own happiness was deeply implicated—child, brother, sister, husband, wife, had fallen into dishonour and infamy. Suppose him to be a man of intense affections, and of high moral principle, and think what an overwhelming, inexpressible shock of pain and grief it would be to him to hear, that one dearer to him than life had been detected in some act of shameful baseness and so had fallen into irretrievable disgrace. Would he not be stung by an anguish, a borrowed humiliation, as bitter as if the sin had been his own? Nay, would not the borrowed grief be in one respect more poignant than that of the evil

doer himself? For the very fact that the latter could commit the sin would indicate a comparative moral insensibility; so that it would be possible for one of keen moral susceptibility to discern, as the culprit himself could not, the gravity of the guilty deed, and to feel the burden of borrowed guilt harder to bear than the original. Few, indeed, are they who are endowed with a sympathetic sensitiveness so keen, and a moral nature so elevated, as this illustration implies. If we had many such burdens to bear, what heart of mortal mould could long sustain the load?

But what ordinary men, even the best, can only rarely and feebly experience, He in whom was no sin was called in fullest measure constantly to bear. "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "He was made sin for us." "Our iniquities were laid upon Him." What most men can feel intensely in the case only of those who are closely related to them, and even then only with regard to flagrant instances of moral excess, our Lord is represented as feeling for all men and for all the sin and sorrow of the world. He loved all men with a love which our feeble philanthropy can feel only for a few, and compared with which our most ardent affection is coldness. On the vilest,

the lowest, the least, He looked as made in the very image of God, as the children of the heavenly Father. And, so regarding them, He saw them everywhere beset by the moral plague that had wrought in them deformity and disaster.

And further, as I have said, as He was endowed with a moral susceptibility infinitely more quick and keen than the best and purest of mankind, the presence of sin created in Him a repugnance, a moral recoil, a sorrow and shame, which the fallen and guilty could never feel for themselves.

Such, then, were some of the elements of suffering for sin which are not only possible but necessary in the experience of a morally pure and sinless nature ; and these, could they in any way be conceived of as transferred to us, would constitute, for the reasons I have already specified, an atonement or satisfaction more real and adequate than any external and arbitrary infliction. It meets, as I have said, the demand that the atonement for sin should belong to its own order of things, that a moral and spiritual evil should be expunged or cancelled by a suffering which is itself moral and spiritual. And further, it possesses this virtue, that it is the only kind of suffering that prepares for forgiveness. For forgiveness is not a boon that

can be bestowed by an arbitrary will on the indifferent and impenitent, alike with the soul that is penetrated with a sense of the evil of sin. It is the latter only who, feeling the intolerable burden of guilt, can know and appreciate the blessedness of forgiveness and reconciliation to God.

But here arises, of course, the great problem, as to the imputation of the suffering and death of the sinless to the sinful. Can this moral satisfaction, this expiatory moral suffering, be in any way transferred from the innocent to the guilty? Is there any way in which the moral benefit of it can be conceived as accruing to us, or in which, in its moral and spiritual results, it can become equivalent to our own?

Now, in answer to this question, and to obviate the moral difficulty which it seems to involve, appeal has often been made to the fact that we live under a moral order, of which the suffering of the innocent for the guilty is one of the most unquestionable characteristics. The innocent child is born to a heritage of disease and suffering on account of the vices of the parent or ancestor; the selfish spendthrift entails penury and hardship on those who are dependent on him; the benefactor sacrifices ease, wealth, health, life itself, for

the sake of the miserable, the down-trodden, the ignorant and degraded. The pioneers of civilization sow in tears what subsequent generations reap in joy ; and often it is the lot of the noblest of men, whose ideas and projects are in advance of their time, to pass their lives in unfriended toil or persecution, and to leave to future ages the precious legacy of their thought and labour.

But, though human society is so ordered that its members are implicated with each other in good or evil, and the results of our moral actions are passed over from one to another, this fact does not afford any countenance to the notion of imputation of moral merit or demerit, or its transference from the innocent to the guilty or *vice versa*. We suffer for others, but we do not, and cannot, sin for them. To take the instances above adduced, the innocent offspring suffer for the vices of the profligate parent, but their sufferings do nothing to lessen his guilt, nor is his guilt in any sense imputed to them. The benefactor or philanthropist offers up his life as a sacrifice for the emancipation of the lost and miserable from ignorance and vice ; but, while they reap the benefit of his self-devotion, the moral merit remains his alone.

Though, however, the notion of a merely external imputation of moral merit to those who are yet in their sins is untenable, there is a profound meaning in the Christian doctrine known by the theological formula of "Justification by faith." Whatever else it means, one idea expressed by it is that faith is the spiritual link that brings us into living union with Christ; so that, not by any arbitrary supposition or legal fiction, but actually, in the fundamental principle of our moral life, we become one with Him. It is not that the merit of the perfect righteousness and atoning sacrifice and death of Christ is, in some incomprehensible way, ascribed to us; but that there is a profound sense in which they become actually our own—His sorrow our sorrow, His sacrifice our sacrifice, His perfect life, in all its ideal beauty and elevation, the very life we live. It is only thus by the conception that the essential principle of the life of Christ becomes by faith the essential principle of our own, that the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction for sin and imputed righteousness can be freed from that character of unreality and fiction which has been often ascribed to it.¹

¹ Cf. the sermon, "Can Righteousness be imputed?" *University Sermons*, p. 112 seq.

It is true, indeed, that there is a sense in which the atoning work of Christ is a thing achieved for us apart from any effort on our part. It is a finished work, a satisfaction for sin complete in itself, anterior to any act of faith by which the individual believer appropriates its benefits. The satisfaction which it renders to divine justice, it may be truly averred, needs no supplementary act of faith on our part to render it adequate. Further, it is not difficult to understand why many religious men have always been disposed to deplete faith of any moral value and significance—why, in other words, they have been jealous of any attempt to regard the subjective act by which the believer appropriates its benefits as a necessary element in the work of redemption. For any such attempt has seemed to them to detract from the aspect of free and unmerited grace in which they desire and delight to regard it, and to make it a conjunct work of God and man rather than a manifestation of divine love absolute and unmingled.

It is, moreover, the very sense of moral weakness and helplessness that drives the sinner to the feet of God. It is our felt incapacity, by anything we can do or suffer, to free ourselves from the hateful bondage of evil, that deprives us of all self-con-

fidence, gives rise to the cry for help and deliverance by a power which is other than our own, and disposes us to welcome the revelation that all we need has been done for us by the redeeming and saving work of Christ. It is obvious how this attitude of mind should create a predisposition to minimize the moral or subjective element in faith, and to regard it as nothing more than the passive reception of a boon that has been already won for us, the stretching forth of the hand to receive from the Divine Benefactor the inestimable benefit of a satisfaction to which nothing on our part can be added.

Yet, if we turn from the side of the giver to that of the receiver, there is obviously a point beyond which the purely objective aspect of the Atonement cannot be pressed. To emphasize it so as to exclude *every* subjective element, would be to make its benefits attainable indiscriminately by the indifferent and impenitent, alike with the soul that is penetrated by the sense of its spiritual needs. A salvation that is absolutely complete independently of any moral activity in the recipient, would be a salvation that superseded any demand for moral goodness or holiness of life, and that could be claimed and possessed by

those who remained in their sins, impenitent and unbelieving.

Further, it is to be considered that no moral and spiritual good can ever be conveyed to us passively. In the very passivity of the receiver, so to speak, an element of activity must be present. Material blessings can be conferred on a being who remains as inert as the vessel into which water is poured, or the coffer in which money is deposited. But a spiritual blessing can only be spiritually received. The intelligence must apprehend it, the conscience must recognize and appreciate it, the will and active energies of the soul must go forth to grasp and appropriate it.

And in an especial manner must this be true of that highest and most precious of all spiritual blessings, the salvation that comes to us through the redemption that is in Christ. The faith that makes us participants in His perfect righteousness and His atoning sacrifice and death, so far from being an attitude of mind inert, unintelligent, passive, is one of the most intense moral activity; so far from being destitute of moral value and significance, it may be said to be itself the principle of all moral excellence, in which all goodness is virtually contained. For

what it means is nothing less than the absolute surrender of the soul to God, the renunciation of self, and the identification of our whole life and being with that perfect ideal which is presented to us in the life and death of Christ. It is only another name for that which the great Christian Apostle so often represents as a dying to self and living to Christ.

“I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” “If one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him.” What in such forms of expression St. Paul seems to point to as the distinctive principle of the Christian life, is an annulling of the life of self and of all selfish desires and impulses, and a blending of my will with the mind and will of Christ so absolute that, in a sense, my private, particular self may be said to have become extinct and my very being to be absorbed and lost in His. So close, so nearly

approaching to identification becomes this union with Christ that, not in a figure, but in a most real sense, we become participants in the spirit and virtue of His life and death, sharers in His condemnation of sin, in His divine sorrow and sacrifice, in His sense of the misery of estrangement from God, and in His sense of the joy and blessedness of reconciliation with the Father of Spirits.

It is true, indeed, that when we thus describe self-surrender to Christ as of the essence of our Christian faith, we seem to speak rather of the final end and aim than of the initial act of the Christian life. Faith, however earnest and sincere, leaves the life even of the best of men far short of perfection, subject, it may be, to many blemishes and shortcomings. The re-awakening of selfish impulses and passions often detracts from the completeness of our self-renunciation ; and it might even seem as if devotion to Christ were only the exceptional experience of our higher and more emotional moments, rather than the uniform spirit and genius of our life. But the answer is, that the Christian life, like all other kinds of life, is not a series of disconnected acts, but of acts that are the manifestation and evolution of one organic principle ; and that here too, as elsewhere,

the germ, though it were only as a grain of mustard seed, contains in it virtually and potentially the future fruit and flower, the undisclosed beauty and perfection that are yet to be. Absolute assimilation to Christ may be an ideal which, even in the lives of the holiest and best of men, is only a far-off attainment; nevertheless, in the first, faint breath of a living faith, in the earliest touch of a genuine aspiration after goodness, the principle of that divine life which is its final outcome is already contained; and though not extensively and exhaustively, intensively and in essence, the perfect union of the soul with Christ is there. The residuum of selfishness that still clings to us, the vain fears and vainer hopes that pertain to the things seen and temporal, so far as they intrude on us, are only the survival of a life that is no longer ours. The true and real life of the soul is that which is "hid with Christ in God." Effort, struggle, conflict with indwelling sin, nay, the painful consciousness of moral relapse, may be in some measure the characteristics of the outward life; but in that inner sphere in which the true life lies, the strife is over, the pain of conflict is ended, the victory is already won, the peace of perfect reconciliation with God, the peace that passeth understanding, is already ours.

LECTURE XIX.

THE KINGDOM OF THE SPIRIT.

THE Christian theory of redemption passes by a natural transition from the manifestation of God in the person and life of Christ, to the universal presence of God in the souls of individual believers and in the organic unity of the Church. Our Lord Himself is recorded as speaking of the necessity of this transition, and of the vast and important advance which it implies in the relation between God and man. The phrase "Kingdom of God," which is of frequent use in the Synoptic Gospels, and which is often employed by theological writers as an expression for the new order of things that Christianity seeks to establish in the world, is obviously a figurative or pictorial form of thought, and one which, in some respects, falls short of the essential nature of Christianity and of the relation to God which it introduces. The distinctive charac-

teristic of the kingly office is that of the external rule of an outward potentate, who publishes laws and enforces them by the sanctions of rewards and punishments, and who, even if he reign over a free people with a constitutional authority, exerts a dominion which is still something outside of and foreign to the inmost nature of the subject.

But if, in the dispensation of the Spirit, Christ became simply the king of a world-wide empire, it would not have been, to quote His own words, "expedient for" His followers that He should "go away." For a present and visible, is better than an absent king. The publication of the will of a sovereign withdrawn into perpetual seclusion from his people, whilst it might appeal to emotions of ignorant wonder and awe, could never exert over them an influence so potent as that of a living personality whom they knew and profoundly honoured and revered. Even for the survivors who have actually seen and known him, the image of a departed personality can never be so vivid as that of the beloved master, teacher, friend, on whose face they look, to whose words they listen, who lends to abstract lessons the incalculable influence of a life of moral elevation and beauty and a presence that appeals to immediate and personal devotion—to

whom, moreover, in their difficulties and perplexities, they can repair for fresh direction and guidance.

We may treasure the sacred memory, we may fondly recall the words and deeds of departed greatness or goodness; but, do what we will, the image fades away more or less from the imagination of the most devoted follower, and amidst the rush of present cares and interests, there are times when he ceases to be thought of, and only by a renewed effort can the image of what he was be brought up before us. If this memory of the past were the only bond that united even his friends and followers to the Master they once knew and loved, it is impossible to think that they could gain by losing Him.

Still more obviously must this hold good of those who never knew Christ after the flesh, and whose knowledge of Him is, at best, only second-hand. Fainter, of necessity, is an image which can only be reproduced by description and testimony. As time rolls on, it becomes possible for historic criticism to doubt or dispute the recorded facts of His life, and even the very existence of that life itself. Intellectual difficulties supervene to blur the picture of a long-vanished personality; and for the questioning and critical

intelligence, there arises the possibility of regarding the extant narrative of His career as only a subjective conception which has crystallized into a concrete form, or as a historical fiction woven by pious imagination out of a few scattered facts and traditions.

But, whatever force there may be in these considerations as to the superiority in point of privilege of the contemporaries of a great personality over their successors, the point of view thus expressed is obviously not that of the New Testament writers, and especially of St. Paul and the author of the Fourth Gospel. In point of privilege, in their view, the kingdom of the Spirit is an advance on, and not a retrogression from, the kingdom of the Son. In the words above quoted, our Lord Himself is represented as declaring to His immediate followers that, even for them, it was expedient that He should go away, and as pronouncing that whatever advantage to their faith it was to have seen and known His outward personality, *they* were more blessed who had not seen and yet had believed. And when we inquire into the ground for the seemingly paradoxical assertion that they who had never seen Him would know Him best, we find that it resolves itself into the affirmation that

there is a presence of Christ with His believing followers, infinitely more intimate and profound than that of His outward contiguity as an individual person—a presence which does not cease with the passing away of the latter, nay, of which that passing away is the necessary condition.

In all ordinary cases, death dissolves our conscious fellowship with those who are taken from us. Our own life and the life of the world with all its interests and events flow on, but they who felt the deepest interest in us and it, have passed absolutely away from all knowledge or concern in anything that is done under the sun. If we need friends, counsellors, guides, amidst the perplexities of life, we must turn to others. We can no longer feel the strengthening power of their stronger personality or the consciousness of their watchful sympathy. They have gone we know not whither, into regions and worlds unknown, and they are no longer cognizant of us, nor we of them.

But the view of the New Testament writers seems to be, that there is one grand exception to this rule. The presence of Christ is a presence never withdrawn. In form it vanishes, in essence it abides with us for ever. Nay, as they seem to teach, it is a presence not only more lasting, but immeasurably

closer, more intimate, more universal, than that vouchsafed to men during the brief years of His earthly life. He ceased to be known as the outward Master and Friend of a few personal followers, or the occasional visitant of a few earthly homes, that He might become the indwelling life of all believing souls, a presence not intermittent but constant, transfused through their inmost being in all regions of space, in all ages of time. It is this which constitutes the fundamental idea of the kingdom of the Spirit, and which seems to be taught in such words as these: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "This mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

What meaning, then, the question arises, can we attach to this conception? Is there any intel-

ligible sense in which we can say that Christ abides with us, and becomes better known to us after, than during His outward, individual presence on earth?

Now there are various explanations of this problem which able writers have proposed, and which, whatever measure of truth they contain, do not seem to exhaust the Scripture doctrine to which I have referred. Shall we, for instance, interpret the language I have quoted with reference to Christ's abiding presence, simply in the sense in which we say that a good man's life becomes a permanent legacy to the world; that there is that in the career of a noble personality which never dies, but constitutes an enduring contribution to the spiritual life of the race? It is indeed true that, in this sense, Christ is ever with us. Measured merely by its traditional influence, no such life as His has ever been lived on earth. No other life has so triumphed over death, has gone on as His has done, reliving itself through the ages, penetrating the individual and social life of mankind. But the abiding presence of Christ, as St. Paul and the other New Testament writers conceive of it, is surely something more than simply that of a good man's memory. So to interpret it would be

to thin down the conception to a mere metaphor, and to leave the language in which it is expressed, over-strained and exaggerated.

Or, again, shall we have recourse to the idea that great and good men are often better understood and appreciated, and so become a much more potent force, after death than during their actual life? A great original life resembles a work of art in this, that to be truly understood and appreciated it must be contemplated as a whole; and so it is only when death puts the finishing touch to it, that we can discern its meaning and its greatness. In so far as it is original, as it unfolds a new principle or idea, it is the end that explains the beginning and not the beginning the end; and the beauty of the successive parts or stages only breaks upon us in the light of the completed whole. So, it may be said, in so far as the life of Christ is the embodiment of an original idea, it was only in the retrospect, when the earthly career which expressed it had been completed, when the final touch had been given to the picture, that it was possible for the world to discern its meaning and grandeur. In any conception we form of the person and life of Christ, the death on the Cross is the crown and

consummation of the whole; and until that final act of self-sacrifice had been accomplished, the life itself would have been left a fragment, and the principle it embodied would have lacked its highest expression.

Finally, to name no other aspect of the matter, it may be alleged of Christ, as of all who have enriched by their words and deeds the thought and life of the world, it is not the facts of His individual history, but the ideas that underlie it, that constitute the true value of His life. A true idea is true independently of the facts and events that first suggested it. There are many universal ideas which are their own evidence, apart from the superficial phenomena or the historic events that were the particular occasion of their discovery. The latter—the empirical, historic element—may be disputed, may be difficult to ascertain, may even turn out to be more or less fictitious. But when we have once grasped the principle or doctrine, we are no longer dependent on the proof or disproof of particular facts. The principle remains true, whatever becomes of the facts. The life of Christ has been the source of ideas concerning God and man, and the relations of human nature to the divine, transcending in originality

and importance the contributions made to our knowledge of spiritual things by all other teachers. But, even if many of the details of Christ's life and teaching should fail to stand the test of scientific criticism ; nay, even if we supposed the whole record of the life of Christ to be lost ; still the ideas and doctrines concerning the nature of God and the hopes and destinies of humanity, which had their historic origin in that life, would be recognized as true in themselves, and as having an indestructible evidence in the reason and conscience of man. If our knowledge of Christ consisted solely of biographical knowledge, no later age could have the same facilities of information concerning Him as His own, no later inquirers could possess the same advantages as His contemporaries. But if the only knowledge of Christ that is of supreme importance, is that which apprehends the ideal meaning and purpose of His teaching and actions, then we cannot say that His immediate disciples were in a more favoured position than ourselves. It was only in a vague and imperfect manner that those who were in personal contact with Him, or conversant with the incidents of His outward life, could form any conception of the principles that under-

lay these incidents, and of the spiritual greatness of their teacher and example. And so, when we compare the inadequate apprehension of ideas confused or obscured by the accidents of time and place, which was all that was possible to His contemporaries, with the richer, fuller knowledge to which, in its subsequent experience, the Church has attained, we can understand in some measure the apparent paradox of ascribing higher opportunities of knowledge than His own immediate followers possessed, to those in after times who never knew Him according to the flesh.

It is, then, in these considerations that modern writers have found, as they suppose, the explanation of the superiority of the dispensation of the Spirit to the dispensation of the Son, and especially of that abiding and more intimate relation to Christ which the New Testament writers seem to ascribe to believers in post-Christian times. Yet I think that, on reflection, it will prove impossible to accept any of the views I have just cited, as exhausting the teaching of Scripture regarding the permanent presence of Christ with His Church and with individual believers. When Christ, in the hour of parting from His followers, declared that He would be with them to the end of the world; or when He spoke

of His relation to them as nothing less profound and permanent than His own relation to the Father ; it is impossible to understand these expressions as referring merely to the undying memory and moral influence He would leave behind Him, or to the fact that the ideas He taught would survive the life of the teacher. To see what He really meant we must have recourse to another idea of the New Testament writers, on which special emphasis is laid in the Pauline epistles—the idea, namely, of the organic unity of the Church, the idea, in other words, of all believers in Christ as not a mere collection of separate individualities, but as one corporate whole, of which Christ is the living Spirit or Head. “We being many,” St. Paul writes, “are one body in Christ.” And again, “Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular”; “The Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”; “Ye are complete in Him”; “We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones”; “There is one body and one Spirit.”

The idea which runs through all these passages is, that the relation of Christ to those who in all times and places shall be united to Him by the inner bond of a common faith, is something deeper and closer than that of separate individual persons

to each other, something which can only be represented as the relation of the different organs or members of a living organism to the whole, or to the vital principle that pervades and inspires it.

Now, as I have said more than once, an organism, such as the human body, cannot be conceived as a mere collection or collocation of isolated parts, brought and kept together externally. It is a whole, the manifestation of a living principle, which determines every part and lives in it; it is a systematic unity in which the parts or members have no life of their own, but live, grow, fulfil their proper functions, only in so far as they absolutely surrender any isolated, particular life, to the life of the whole. If any organ or member begin to assert an individual independence, it is assailing the principle of its own life; if its isolation be only partial, it is the independence, not of healthy activity, but of disease and arrested development; if it be complete, it is the independence of the severed limb, which has ceased to be permeated by the vital principle and has become mere dead, inorganic matter. And if thus the members live and fulfil themselves only in union with the universal principle, so, on the other hand, does *it* fulfil or realize itself in them. Apart from its members or organs, the principle of life is only

an abstraction. It is, at most, not a reality, but only an unrealized possibility. To go forth out of self, to realize its latent capabilities in the diversified form and beauty of its organs, and to receive back again in their self-surrender to it the full tide of vital activity which it gives—this is the ideal perfection of the principle of organic life.

Now it is this conception which the Scripture writers, in the passages I have quoted, apply to the new relation in which Christ stands to the Church or society of believers. As an individual person, He has long passed away from the world; but He lives for ever, as the ever-present, ever-active principle of its highest life. Nor, in so far as we believe Him to be the highest manifestation of God, the perfect expression of the divine life, can we, save in some such way as this, conceive of His relation to mankind.

Much of the language in which the New Testament narrates His departure from the world and the heavenly sequel of His history—His ascension, exaltation, and perpetual session at God's right hand, His investiture with external power and glory, His sending down from His celestial abode the Holy Spirit as His deputy to the bereaved Church—

much of this is obviously figurative and cannot be interpreted as literal fact. God cannot be thought of truly as a potentate who sits on a material throne, as having a right hand and calling a favourite to be seated thereat as the place of honour; nor can we speak, save in the way of analogy, of a Divine Spirit as being sent, or descending through space, to a region formerly distant from Him; or as leaving one locality and coming to another, and being able only through local proximity to operate on the souls of men. What we must conceive of as the underlying import of all this pictorial representation is, that the divine principle which manifested itself in the human person and life of Christ, never did or can pass away from the world; and that, now and forever, it manifests itself in the life of every individual believer and in the universal or corporate life of His Church, in which "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And if we reflect for a moment on what is implied in this distinctively Christian view of Christ's permanent relation to His Church, I think we shall see the profound significance of His own declaration as to the blessedness of those who have not seen but have believed; and, again, of St. Paul's assertion that there is a

knowledge of Christ better even than that of those who knew Him after the flesh.

"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," writes St. Paul. These words, whatever else they mean, point to the relation of the believer to Christ as that, not simply of one individual person to another, but as approximating to the blending or identifying of our very life and being with His. We do not simply stand in His presence, listen to His words, behold Him passing through the incidents and actions of His life, feel the power of His teaching, become stirred with admiration for the beauty of His character—all which are experiences consistent with no nearer connection with Him than with any human hero or saint whose individuality is entirely distinct from our own. If there be any meaning in this language, the division between the believer and His Lord is one which more or less completely vanishes; and it gives place to a relation in which we become sharers of the infinite life that is in Him, as closely related to Him as the member to the vital principle of which it is the organ and instrument.

And that this is no incredible relation, but one which finds its witness in our own con-

sciousness, will, I think, be obvious if we reflect, that it is of the very essence of the religious life to be a life that is at once above us and in us, transcending our finite thoughts and feelings, yet in which we most truly realize ourselves and the ideal of our own spiritual nature. For, is it not so that in every moral and religious impulse and action, in all our spiritual experience, we are aware of a power, a presence, an authority, which, though in us, is yet above us; which we have not made nor can unmake, which asserts an absolute domination over our souls, and of which from one point of view we are only the passive organs? What this absolute principle, this imperative of truth and goodness, demands of every human spirit, is the sacrifice, the surrender, the abnegation of our private and particular self—its shallow opinions, its limited ends and interests; that we cease to think our own thoughts, to gratify our own desires, to do our own will, but rejoice to let this absolute, all-comprehending will reign in us and over us.

Yet, on the other hand, it is also the experience of the religious life that, in thus losing and abnegating, we truly gain ourselves: that our true will is not the will of this particular and private self, but

a will that is in harmony with the absolute will ; and that then only do we become aware of the greatness of our better and truer self, when we lose all sense of anything that divides our own self-consciousness from the consciousness of God. For then only have I attained to the true knowledge of divine things, when the voice of eternal reason that speaks *to* me, is at the same time a voice that speaks *in* me—not two concurrent voices but one, sounding through the spiritual intelligence. And then only have I attained to the true ideal of goodness, when the law of duty has ceased to be merely an outward authority to which I must bow ; when it is no self-denial or self-limitation to obey it, but obedience to the one will of eternal righteousness which has become identified with my own. Now, it is this divine principle of which in His person and life Christ was the perfect expression, this eternal spirit of truth and beauty and goodness that was in Him, that becomes the principle of every Christian life ; it is this principle that in all times and places constitutes the everlasting bond of union between the God-man and that universal organic unity of souls which is “ His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

But this leads me to say, lastly, that another

aspect in which the dispensation of the Spirit may be conceived of as an advance on that of the Son, is that, while the latter was necessarily an individual, the former is a universal presence of Christ, and one which binds all believers in closest harmony and union with each other. The visible, corporeal presence of Christ was, of course, possible only at one spot, and at most only to a few of His followers at one time; and that, moreover, only during the few brief years of His earthly ministry. But the spiritual presence of Christ is a presence not limited by the conditions of space and time, a presence in which all believers at one and the same time may participate, and which is the property, not of one age or period of the world's history, but of His Church always, to the end of the world.

Moreover, and as involved in this, whilst the earthly presence of Christ did not necessarily imply any relation to each other of those who looked on His person or listened to His voice, the spiritual presence of Christ binds in deepest unity with each other all, in every place and time, to whom it is vouchsafed. The relation of Christians to each other is a relation in which, from its very nature, all division and isolation are broken down; and innumerable and diversified as are the members of

the Christian communion, in so far as they truly imbibe the spirit of their faith, all differences are lost in a deeper and more comprehensive unity. For the divine life that was manifest in Christ, and which is reproduced in every Christian spirit, is not a life the ideal of which is one ideal for this man or nation or period of the world's history, and another for another. A wide gulf separates the man of learning and culture, richly dowered with gifts of intelligence, from the ignorant and unrefined. The characteristic spirit and genius of one nation may be stamped with its own idiosyncrasy, and barriers more impermeable than dividing seas and mountains may separate the age or country in which we live from other countries and times; but learned or unlearned, Greek or Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—there is one principle of affinity which has power to overleap all earthly divisions; nay, which, outstripping even the division of worlds, is capable of being experienced by every spirit made in God's image in every region of the universe. The Divine Spirit that was embodied in the life of Christ, and which realizes itself in every soul that yields itself to its transforming power, wherever or whenever it takes possession of human spirits, is in essence one and the same in all. The

imperative of duty, the presence within our consciousness that speaks to us in the command, "Be true, be just, be good," is not simply a *similar* presence in your mind and mine, but it is one and the same divine presence in all; and those in every age and country who have responded to it are united together in one undivided confraternity. And as it is one and the same force which binds the atoms of matter together and holds the planets in their orbits, so every pure thought, every holy aspiration, every effort after goodness in the lowliest or the loftiest of human spirits, is a manifestation of the same divine principle that dwelt in Christ and was revealed to the world in His life and death. It is true, indeed, that in the best of men the action of this divine principle is modified and limited by many a foreign admixture. Amidst the perturbing intrusion of selfish desires and impulses, there is much to arrest the free play of vital energy between the members of Christ's body and their Divine Head. But as the words of Christ, which I have quoted, speak of our union with Himself and with each other as finding its type in nothing less than His own union with the Father; so they point to a time when every dividing element shall pass away, when every mind shall

become the pure medium of the Infinite Intelligence, every heart the organ of the Infinite Love, and when all souls that have yielded themselves to Christ, suffused, pervaded in their inmost being by the same Divine Spirit, shall be "made perfect in one."

LECTURE XX.

THE FUTURE LIFE.

“FOR this cause,” says the Apostle Paul, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*” It is as impossible for us, as it was for St. Paul, to realize the unity in which all men are bound together by the Fatherhood of God, and yet to think that the life we share is limited to the compass of a few quickly passing years. If the kingdom of God is already set up on earth, we can hardly imagine that it is subject to time and change. If man is made a “partaker in the divine nature,” it is difficult to believe that he is not reserved for a higher than earthly or finite destiny.

But can we find any reason for this faith outside of the sphere of Christian doctrine? Does the grandeur of that future, which Christianity repre-

sents as God's design for man, find any confirmation in what observation discloses of the inherent capabilities of our nature? If we are destined to rise hereafter above the sphere of the things that are seen and temporal; if a career of boundless attainment in knowledge, goodness, happiness, is possible for us; there must be in the very structure of our being indications of such a career, something that transcends the sphere of time and allies us in essence to the things unseen and eternal. Are any such indications to be found in our nature? I answer that there is an aspect or element of our being—that element which constitutes the principle of our spiritual life and is the source of all knowledge, morality, religion—to which in the truest sense the predicate “eternal” may be applied. Of this element it is no exaggeration to say that it rises above the limits and conditions of time, and that we can think of it, not simply as created by the Author of our being, but as a reflexion or reproduction of His own eternal nature.

For, let us reflect, there are two aspects in which man's nature can be contemplated, in one of which he is like, in the other unlike, all merely finite and temporal existences. On the one hand, he is simply one individual finite object amidst a

world of innumerable finite objects, subject to the same conditions, sharing in the same limitations, occupying but a limited portion of space and a brief section of time, changeful, transient, mortal, determined by relations that are independent of his will, by laws that are common to him with material nature, by appetites, desires, impulses which he shares with the lower animals. But, as I have shown,¹ in so contemplating him, we leave out one all-important aspect of his being, namely, that he is not simply one object amidst an infinite multiplicity of objects, but that he has in him the principle to which all finite objects in the universe are relative, and in and through which all things and beings, himself included, have any meaning and reality. In our ordinary observation of the world, in dealing with its facts and phenomena, we seem to be confronted by a world of realities, which exist in themselves just as we perceive them, and of which we are simply the passive spectators. But the existence of such a world is to us a possible conception, only because in our ordinary observation of nature, we abstract for the moment from one essential factor of the process, namely, the mind of the observer, and deal

¹ Vol. I., p. 183.

with facts and relations of facts as if they were purely objective realities. But it is a truism to say that the least and lowest fact is not fact stript of all relation to thought, but it is fact observed, perceived, thought about, fact as it is for a thinking intelligence. In one sense, therefore, it is true that, "it is understanding which creates the world." And even when it is man himself that is the object of observation, the whole materials of a science of body and mind exist only in relation to the principle of self-consciousness which apprehends and transcends them.

Now, if we reflect on what is involved in this principle, I think we may see that, in two respects, it raises man above the sphere of time and of the things that are seen and temporal, and renders him essentially akin to that Intelligence which is infinite and eternal. For in the first place—as I showed in a former lecture¹—the intelligence which perceives and observes things in time cannot be itself a thing of time. The standard by which we measure cannot itself be one of the things measured. When we apprehend events in their co-existence and succession, the intelligence that performs this function must itself stand above the succession or

¹ Vol. I., p. 185.

stream of events. In being able to discern their flux and transiency, it cannot be flowing and changing with them. There could not be, for it, any such thing as time, if it did not itself belong to an order which is above time, which is or has in it an element that is eternal. Our knowledge is, indeed, a thing of time, in the sense that it is progressive, acquired by successive steps, not by the all-comprehensive flash of a divine intuition—in the sense, in other words, that it takes time to think. But, as taken up into thought, succession itself is not successive, events in time are simultaneously grasped, they enter into a region where they are stript of the form of time, and are apprehended in purely ideal relations. Even when it is our own individual life, with all its incessant changes, its never-ending flow of ideas and feelings, that is the object of observation, the principle, by which we know ourselves as individuals, cannot pertain to us as this particular individuality. When we think of our temporal existence, we are lifted above it to a point of view that is not conditioned by its transiency, but yet in virtue of which alone we can pronounce it to be transitory. It is not too much to say that in this point of view intelligence proves itself

to belong essentially to an order of things which is superior to change and death, and which in its immortal stillness is unaffected and unperturbed by the fluctuation and evanescence that condition all finite things.

But, in the second place, there is another respect in which the capacity for an eternal life pertains to the nature of man. A future of illimitable knowledge and goodness is possible to it, because by its very structure it has the power to realize itself in all that seems to limit it. In one point of view, the realm of knowledge is a realm which stretches far and for ever beyond even the highest human intelligence; yet, in another, we can claim it, in all its illimitableness, as not a foreign territory, but a realm that is virtually our own. In advancing into the unknown, we are not conquering what belongs to an alien or hostile power, but we are reclaiming, entering into possession of an inheritance which from the first is not merely ours, but, in one sense, identified with our very selves. For mind or spirit is the form of an infinite content. As containing in it the principle to which all existence is relative, every advance it makes is not merely an increment to its knowledge, but a disclosure to it of its own

latent wealth. And however long we may imagine the process to continue, we can never conceive any impassable barrier set up, any region into which thought may not and cannot enter. To be capable of the life of thought, is to be capable of a life that is eternal, capable of participation in the life of that Intelligence, for and in which all things have their being.

And the same principle holds good of our moral life. Here, too, we can discern in our nature capabilities which transcend all temporal limits, and which contain in them at least the potentiality of a career of moral progress, which no conceivable future can exhaust. It is, indeed, possible for us, not only to suppress or thwart our moral capabilities till they are far less than commensurate with even the brief term of our earthly existence, but to lead a life having its beginning and end in motives and satisfactions which belong to our transient earthly existence, and even to the passing moments of that existence. For of the appetites, desires, impulses, which have their origin in our sensitive nature, *this* is the essential characteristic, that their satisfaction has in it nothing permanent. It passes away and is gone with the feeling of the moment, and a

thousand such experiences render the subject of them no richer for the future, and imply in him no capacity more lasting than that of the beasts that perish. On the other hand, it is possible for man to lead a life which is on the scale of an immeasurable futurity, nay, with which no temporal existence, however protracted, is commensurate. For in the moral as in the intellectual life, we rise out of the sphere of time and above the things that are seen and temporal, into a life that is, in spirit and essence, one with the life that is eternal. Practically this is brought home to us by the fact that, even for the best of men, perfect moral satisfaction is a thing impossible. In their own eyes, so far from having ever attained or being already perfect, they forget and ignore the things that are behind, and are ever reaching forth to a moral elevation that is still and ever above and beyond them. And the reason of their dissatisfaction lies in this, that the moral ideal with which, by faith, they have identified themselves dwarfs in their eyes all actual, nay, all possible attainments. With every advance in the spiritual life, the criterion by which we measure it expands and enlarges; and the light of the saintliest virtue or heroism grows dim in comparison with it.

The argument, then, to which these considerations are held to lead is simply this, that man's intellectual and moral endowments are on a scale immeasurably larger than the needs of this brief life demand, or than is required for any attainments in knowledge and goodness which even the noblest and best of men reach in their earthly existence; and, therefore, that we can only account for the disproportion by the conception of a future life in which these endowments shall find adequate scope and employment. On any other supposition, there would be involved in the very constitution of the spiritual world an enormous waste of faculty, an unaccountable disparity between the nature of the agent and the function it is set to fulfil. Moreover, there would be a like inexplicable disproportion between the elaborate process of discipline and development to which, in the present life, we are subjected, and the result to which, at the best, it leads. What strange irony of fate would there be in the cultivation and training of the human intelligence, in the hived up fruits of long study and research, in the manifold struggles and self-denials by which a noble and beautiful nature is chastened and refined, if it is to disappear and drop out of existence just when it has be-

come fitted for great and beneficent service in God's universe. If there be any truth in what I have said as to the infinite capabilities of human nature, the loss which such a catastrophe would involve would amount to the loss, not merely of a few further years to which life might have been prolonged, but of an illimitable future with all its unknown treasure of knowledge and goodness. In no other way, it would seem, can this meaningless squandering of priceless spiritual wealth be obviated than by the conception, that the present life is only the initial stage of human existence, and that elsewhere the unfinished history will be resumed, and the unexhausted endowments find fitting occupation and fulfilment.

And yet, when all this has been said, there are many to whom the argument seems far from conclusive. To them, it seems to be an appeal from fact and experience to conjecture and unsupported theory. What we seem to see and know is, not simply the interruption, but the extinction, of life and thought in the myriads of the human race without exception. What we do not know and only vaguely vaticinate, is a resumption of the interrupted life in that other world which we imagine beyond the grave. Unnumbered as are the

generations that have passed away into this supposed region, not one has ever returned to assure us of its reality; nor has even a single voice ever reached us to break the awful secret or to convince us that the notion of a life to come is other than a dream.

Nor, again—it has been urged—does the argument from the alleged waste and squandering of human faculty receive any confirmation from the analogy of the present life. For, however we may account for or explain it, the order of the world in which we live is not inconsistent with, and does include, much apparent waste of resource and frustration of purpose and capacity. Not to speak of the myriads of marred and arrested organisms—blighted plants, spoiled and prematurely extinguished specimens of animal life, on behalf of which no theorist puts forth any claim to survival in another world—there are innumerable instances of blighted, broken human lives, of the fair promise of youth belied by early death or overshadowed by moral failure or disaster, of talents suppressed for lack of culture and an appropriate sphere, of fine moral natures dwarfed and distorted by evil surroundings. When, again, we think of the vast multitudes of human beings, sharers with ourselves

in all the latent capabilities of the nature of men, who pass their lives in the darkness and degradation of barbarism, of others amidst the environment of civilization whose pleasures are scarcely one remove from those of the lower animals, and yet others whose highest ideal is decorous respectability or slavish conformity to the accidental social standard of their time and place,—can we lay any stress on the argument that the career of man must be adequate to the inherent capabilities of his nature?

Finally, it may be urged that we cannot separate the material or physical from the spiritual element of man's nature, so as to conceive of a life pertaining to the one in which the other has ceased to have any part. Could the soul be what it is apart from the body? Must we not rather say that man is not a mere combination of two essentially different substances, for a time artificially connected and existing side by side; but that the spiritual and the corporeal are inwardly related elements, implicated with each other in the unity of man's nature and life? You cannot divide or abstract his intellectual and moral from his sensitive or corporeal life, or from the desires and passions that spring out of the latter. Without the material

supplied by sense to spirit, human intelligence would be reduced at best to a blank potentiality of intellectual life. Our moral life takes its special complexion from the inseparable relation between what we term our higher and our lower nature. Moral action is not the pursuit by a purely spiritual or immaterial nature of an abstract ideal. Without the impulses and passions the moral ideal would exist in a vacuum. In so far as virtue consists in the ordering or subjugation of the lower impulses, they must be there to be ordered or subdued; and the attempt to reach moral perfection by holding ourselves aloof from the natural desires, would be the attempt to attain goodness by abstraction from that without which no moral life, good or bad, is possible.

How, then, can we speak of a future life of intelligence and moral perfection as attainable by a spirit that has been severed from that bodily nature which is essential to the very existence of a moral and spiritual agent? Moreover, though we may refuse to define thought with the materialist as a function of matter, we cannot deny the apparent dependence of mind and mental action on bodily organization. There is good reason to hold that there is a physical process which corresponds to

every mental process ; and, especially, that there is a certain cerebral movement or change which is the condition or concomitant of every mental act. The inseparable connection between mind and its organ is manifested by the phenomena of weakened or frustrated, as well as of positive or normal, mental activity. What the normal action of the subtle material organ creates, its morbid or weakened action can dissipate or uncreate. Let partial exhaustion, or slow decay, or sudden injury, affect the organ, and the capacity of sustained intellectual effort is undermined, the insight of clear intelligence is blurred, and the highest genius is reduced to the level of dulness. Let the physical disorganization go further, and mental activity is wholly annulled, and the lucidity of reason gives place to the vagaries of madness or the babblings of imbecility. And, finally, with the cessation of the organic or functional activity of the brain, utter night and darkness descend over the horizon of consciousness. Instead, therefore, of regarding death as the precursor of a more exalted life, is there not good reason for regarding it as the final extinction of all mental life, inasmuch as it is the disintegration of that physical organization on which mental life invariably depends?

I shall defer to the next lecture the consideration of these objections to the argument for immortality which is drawn from the inherent greatness of human nature. Meanwhile, I shall conclude the present lecture by a few brief remarks on a view of human progress, which has been held to supersede the notion of an individual immortality. Suppose we were constrained to admit the force of the foregoing or other objections to the immortality of the individual, there is another immortality which remains unaffected. According to this theory, the disproportion between the greatness of man's nature and the brevity, poverty, and incompleteness of his earthly life, is to find its solution, not so much in a future life of the individual in another world, as in the ever-advancing life of the race and the greatness to which it is destined in the world in which we now live. It is not in a heaven beyond the skies that we are to look for the sequel or complement of the wise or good man's existence on earth, but in that undying moral and spiritual existence of mankind to which every wise and good man's life is a contribution. The individual life whose capabilities are the silent prophecy of a splendid future is, indeed, abruptly terminated. But the promise is not thus left unfulfilled. It is

taken up into a wider movement that is never for a moment arrested; its results pass into that universal life of humanity which is ever growing, deepening, developing, ever through the ages advancing to its consummation. Nothing good or great in any human life ever dies, but neither does it remain as an isolated, individual thing. It remains as absorbed, incorporated, merged in a grander life, into which the best that is in the lives of the innumerable members of the race is ever passing. With this life in its perpetuity and undisclosed glory and splendour, our highest capabilities, our most boundless aspirations, our most devoted efforts and sacrifices are not disproportioned or incompatible.¹

Now it cannot, I think, be questioned that this theory of corporate, as distinguished from individual immortality, contains in it an element of truth; and, further, that the main objection to it, though a fatal one, is not that with which at first blush it seems to be chargeable. It is not, it may be said, the immortality of the race but his own, that is the all-important one for each individual: not whether the progress of mankind shall go on in a

¹ This idea is further developed in the Sermon on "Corporate Immortality," *University Sermons*, p. 176.

world he is soon to quit, but whether there is a world beyond the grave, and whether death, when it comes, shall be the transition to it. Even if it be true that the ideal of a perfect society is in some far distant day to be realized in this world, what personal interest can I have in a perfection and happiness of which I shall never know, and in which I shall never participate? Is not this theory, even if it were established, to all intents and purposes the denial of immortality, in the sense in which all men but the theorists understand it? Can the majority of men be induced to care much for the state of the world ages after they have left it, or to regard the thought of its progressive welfare as a compensation for the blotting-out of personal consciousness in the inevitable hour that is approaching to each of us?

To this objection one obvious answer is, that experience proves such care for the world's future to be no impracticable or fantastic motive. The objects which appeal to the best and noblest natures, and which actually do call forth the most enthusiastic zeal and self-devotion, are not those which are limited by the horizon of our brief individual life, but those which transcend that life; and they call forth the intensest interest just

in proportion as they do transcend it. It is not exclusive regard to our own day and generation that is the sole or principal motive in the labours of the philanthropist, the statesman, the legislator ; in the houses we build, the trees we plant, the books we write, the schemes of social amelioration we devise, the educational institutions we found, in our plans and endeavours for the subversion of pauperism, ignorance, crime, for the promotion of the physical and spiritual welfare of mankind. It is for such ends as these, and not for the pleasures and pains, the gains and losses that extend no further than their own individual lives, that men recognize it to be good and noble to live ; and it is these which actually call forth their highest aspiration and effort, and bring to them a happiness far transcending in depth and intensity all merely private and personal interests.

But the main objection to this theory is, that it is propounded as a substitute for that of individual immortality, and not as its concomitant or complement. To some of those who espouse the notion of an exclusively corporate immortality, it seems to add a certain touch of sublimity to the self-sacrifice of the men who live and labour for the good of the race, that it is a good they shall never

see or share. Unselfishness seems to reach its maximum, when even the gratitude and homage of men can never reach the ears of the benefactor whose life has been offered up for their good. But is there, it may be answered, any ingredient of selfishness, any abatement of disinterestedness, in the delight which the benefactor feels in beholding the welfare and happiness of others as the result of his own efforts? Is it not a reward of the purest and most elevated character which a lover of his kind receives, when he contemplates the success of his labours for the extirpation of ignorance, vice, and crime, and for the diffusion of light and liberty over the world? Would not the Quixotic disinterestedness which rejects such a reward, become still greater, if the benefactor not only did *not* know of the success of his labours, but knew that they would fail?

What gives rise to this ascription of selfishness to the desire of individual immortality, is, perhaps, an unspiritual conception of heaven and the future life, which is too common even among religious men. But this conception, against which the charge of "other-worldliness" has often been justly urged, has no necessary relation to the true idea of immortality. Nor, if heaven be the expression for the

immortality that awaits the pure, the unselfish, the loving, can we conceive a higher climax of its blessedness than in watching or learning of the progress of mankind in knowledge and goodness, or in contemplating the nearer realization of that ideal of human perfection, which has been through the ages the secret impulse to all noble effort, and will prove its richest and sweetest reward?

LECTURE XXI.

THE FUTURE LIFE (*Continued*).

THE argument for immortality which was treated of in the last lecture—the argument, namely, which is based on the disproportion between the greatness of man's spiritual nature and the brief duration and limited needs of the present life—would be deprived of all its force, if the life of the spirit could be shown to be bound up with the physical organism which death disintegrates and dissolves. If thought is a function of matter, or, at any rate, inseparably connected with the activity of the brain and nervous system, no speculations on the inherent grandeur and limitless capabilities of the human mind can overturn the inevitable conclusion which the death of the body involves. But it is just this position which scientific materialism takes up, with regard to the relation between mind and matter, and to the process by which physical move-

ments, changes of nervous and brain tissue, seem to give rise to, or are the inseparable concomitants of, such apparently incommensurable phenomena as sensations, feelings, ideas. What we know, or seem to know, of the conditions of sensation is, that certain vibrations of ether strike on the surface of the retina or other organ of sense, and produce certain movements in the organism "which pass in waves along the in-carrying nerve to the optic or other ganglion of the brain, and that when the impression arrives there, a sensation, say, of light or sound, is experienced." Within, therefore, the tiny cavity of the human skull there is, it would seem, a mechanism at work, by which material motions, vibrations of ether, irritations, and molecular changes of nervous tissue are transformed into the feeling of shimmering light or ringing sound, and into perceptions of the radiant, coloured, vocal world of our sensible experience. But for this wondrous transforming power with which brain matter is, or seems to be, endowed, nature and natural phenomena would have no relation to our consciousness; from stars and suns rays of light might continually be pouring forth, etheric vibrations might be passing through space, playing on the surface of the body, propagated as motions along its wave-conducting

nervous filaments ; but, if nothing more took place, they, and the process by which they communicate with us, would be only "congeries of moving masses and vibrating molecules," an external world of motion and change which yet was unknown and unknowable. For it is only when they reach the brain that they undergo, through its mysterious agency, the marvellous transmutation by which they become for us luminous spheres floating in the distant realms of space. Nor is the process limited to our sensations and perceptions of the outward world ; the creative constructive power of the cerebral matter seems to extend over the whole compass of human thought. As there is reason to believe that there is a physical, corresponding to every mental process, a certain cerebral movement which is the condition of every intellectual act ; so there is, it would seem, a sense in which it may be said that to mere infinitesimal changes in a white or gray material substance in man's physical organism, not only the thoughts and feelings that make up our ordinary mental life, but all science, all philosophy, all art, all the vast body of our knowledge and speculation concerning things finite and infinite, and also every act of will, and the whole content of our moral life, owe their existence. Nor, as I said in the last lecture, is

this process one which goes on only on the positive or constructive side. What the normal action of the brain creates, its morbid or weakened action can dissipate or uncreate. An affection of the conducting nerve or brain-centre brings with it a corresponding loss of sensation. Let one purely physical condition cease to operate, and the waves of ether wake no mental response, and wisdom at one or other entrance is shut out. Let partial exhaustion, decay, injury, affect the organ of thought, and the capacity of intellectual exertion is marred. Let physical disorganization go on, and the lucidity of reason gives place to imbecility; and, finally, with the cessation of the organic or functional activity of the brain, mental activity is completely arrested, and the light of reason is lost in utter intellectual darkness.

What, then, is the inference which modern materialistic speculation would have us draw from such facts as these? The inference is, that thought is but a function of matter—the highest expression it may be, but still the expression—of the same molecular force which has its earliest manifestation in inorganic nature. “All vital action”—these are the words of one eminent biologist¹—“may be said to be

¹ Huxley's *Collected Essays*, Vol. I., p. 154.

the result of the molecular forces of the protoplasm which displays it. And if so, it must be true in the same sense, and to the same extent, that the thoughts to which I am now giving utterance, and your thoughts regarding them, are the expressions of the molecular changes in that matter of life which is the source of our other vital phenomena." Again, "Consciousness is an expression of the molecular changes which take place in that nervous matter which is the organ of consciousness."¹ "All states of consciousness are immediately caused by molecular changes of the brain substance."² It is true, as is conceded by the writer from whom I have quoted, that there is for our thought "an unbridged gulf" between bodily organization and mind or intelligence. In what way the physical is transformed into the psychical, we know not. But here the now universally accepted doctrine of the conservation of energy comes to our aid. All physical forces, however apparently unlike, are convertible into each other—light into heat, heat into chemical energy, that again into electricity, and so forth; and there is the strongest reason to believe that this generalization extends beyond physical

¹ *Id.*, Vol. II., p. 163.

² *Id.*, Vol. I., p. 244.

changes to the realm of feeling and thought, and that as vital is but transformed mechanical and chemical energy, it is only another stage or expression of the same process when we seem to find vital energy converted into sensations and ideas. If, therefore, consciousness is only the transformed energy that exists in nervous matter "when that matter has attained to a certain degree of organization,"¹ then, with the breaking-up of that form of organization, mind and mental phenomena, which are but a function of it, must of necessity cease to be.

Are we then constrained to accept this materialistic doctrine, with all its destructive bearing on the continuity of our intellectual life? It would delay us too long to enter into a thorough discussion of this question. But besides other objections, there are, as I have elsewhere tried to show, and must here very briefly repeat, two objections, one on the physical, the other on the psychological side, which seem to be absolutely fatal to the materialistic theory of the relation of mind to matter.

In the first place, we might derive a kind of refutation of this theory from that very law of

¹ Huxley's *Collected Essays*, Vol. II., p. 162.

the conservation of energy on which it professes to rest. What that law means is, as we have seen, that the amount of physical energy in the universe is never diminished or increased ; that heat, light, electricity, magnetism, are only various forms of energy which are convertible into each other, and that each is the exact quantitative equivalent of that from which it has been converted. But now, if the materialistic theory be true, instead of the amount of physical energy remaining constant, there lies, beyond the region known to science, another and supra-physical region into which drafts of energy are perpetually being made, and from which increments of energy are perpetually being poured forth or restored. The law in question is that in nature there is no rupture of continuity, that physical causes will always be followed by physical effects, and physical effects will always be accounted for, without any non-physical interposition, by physical causes. And, indeed, in point of fact, we know that in the whole process before us there is no room left for the interposition of other than physical phenomena, that "it goes on as if nothing but physical antecedents and consequents were present," and that "the entire amount of force operating in the antecedents of thought passes into

its physical consequents" without the smallest breach of physical continuity.¹

But consider what, according to this theory, takes place in every case of sensation, in every case of voluntary action. In the former, a physical movement, a light-wave or sound-wave, is propagated along its proper nerve till it reaches the brain; and then, in the form of a sensation, it vanishes into a region beyond, absorbs, by a new transformation, from the realm of nature a certain quantity of its energy, leaves certain of its physical antecedents without physical consequents, and diminishes for the time the sum of energy in the world. In every voluntary action, on the other hand, an equally arbitrary increase, or, at least, arbitrary restoration, of the sum of energy takes place. From the region of mind or consciousness, energy which had passed away from the physical world, and which had taken for the moment a psychical form, comes back to it in the re-transformed shape of nerve force, producing motion through the muscular apparatus. A physical effect for which there is no physical antecedent, is interposed into the order of nature; and the sum of

¹ Cf. Clifford's Essay on "Body and Mind." *Lectures and Essays*, Vol. II., p. 56.

her energy, actual or potential, is more than it was. The alleged transformation of physical into psychical energy is, therefore, in obvious inconsistency with the law on which it professes to rest.

But, in the second place, the fundamental objection to the materialistic theory is, that it begs the whole question at issue. The matter out of which mind and mental action are to be extracted, is itself the expression of mind; the thought or intelligence that is alleged to be a function of matter is, and must be, already presupposed in that out of which it is said to be educed. Consider what the problem is. Before you could reach thought or mind as a last result, you must needs wholly eliminate it from the data with which you start. The matter out of which mind is to spring, must be matter *minus* mind, matter into the constitution of which not the faintest ingredient of mind must be permitted to enter. The ingredients of the process out of which consciousness is to emerge, must be wholly outside of consciousness, must be conceived of as existing prior to and apart from the intelligence that thinks them. But one does not need to be a votary of idealism to see that the task which materialism thus sets to itself is an impossible one. Whether there be such a thing as a world of

realities, of "things in themselves," that lies outside of and beyond thought, whether in that world there may be unknown things that might be called atoms, molecules, etherial waves, nervous fibres, etc., existing in themselves before any mind begins to perceive or think them, is not the question. If such things there are, it is not by them, not by matter and motion outside of thought, that you try to explain the origin of thought, but by the matter and motion you think, which are grasped by thought, exist for thought, presuppose, in any and everything you can say about them, the presence and activity of thought. The least and lowest fact as to the material world is not, for you, fact *minus* any element of thought, and out of which thought might be conceived to emerge; but it is fact as object of thought, fact for an observing mind, and which has mind as an inseparable factor of it. And so you can no more start with bare material facts, to the production of which, to say the least, mind or intelligence does not contribute, than you can outstrip your own shadow or leap off your own shoulders. In the very raw material out of which you profess to work up mind, mind has already been at work.

There is one other objection to the doctrine

of immortality to which, in a former lecture, I have incidently referred, but which—as, rightly viewed, it becomes one of the strongest arguments for immortality—I shall, in conclusion, briefly notice. The belief in a future state of rewards and punishments introduces, it has been maintained, a selfish element into the moral and religious life. The “compensation argument,” as often presented, is that which asserts the necessity of a future life in order to redress the unequal or inequitable distribution of outward good and evil in the present life. Ever since man has been capable of reflection on the conditions of his life, he has been impressed by the apparent disproportion between character and happiness, between moral desert and the rewards or penalties allotted to it. Justice seems to demand that goodness and happiness, vice and misery, should be invariably connected; and so deeply seated is this conviction that the primitive moral intelligence—as represented, for example, by the friends of Job—could fall upon no other solution of the problem, no other way of accounting for the misfortunes of seemingly good and pious men, than that of secret or disguised wickedness. In a perfect world, or under an absolutely just system of moral government, we should never witness such

a spectacle as that of prosperous vice, successful fraud or knavery, wealth, honour, preferment, power—all the elements of social success and happiness—flowing in on men by no means remarkable for their virtues; or, on the other hand, that of men of blameless integrity or even of heroic and saintly lives, subjected to all sorts of ills and misfortunes, bodily and mental. Nay, the injustice or inequity seems to be still more flagrant, when we see that it is the very goodness of the good to which their extra share of suffering, the very badness of the bad to which their immunity from suffering, is often traceable. On the one hand, the very sensitiveness of conscience which characterizes the former, subjects them to inward pangs of self-reproach, to painful moral conflicts and struggles, to bitter distress for the sorrow and sin of the world, of which the latter know nothing; and on the other hand, against these and other causes of suffering the vicious or morally indifferent are case-hardened by their moral insensibility. And the argument is, that the existence of these and similar anomalies points to the existence of a world to come, in which they shall be redressed and corrected: in which the good shall be compensated for the sufferings of this life, and the bad subjected to

penalties which will outweigh all their unmerited happiness.

But to this argument, and to the rough and ready view of moral equity on which it turns, it has been often objected that it introduces a spurious motive into the moral and spiritual life—a charge from which, it is even added, the moral teaching of Christianity is not exempt. Moral action, it is a truism to say, is not the purest, when it needs to be sustained by the hope of reward, either in this world or the next. If that virtue is the highest which is self-sufficing, which finds in moral action its own end and satisfaction, then even Pagan virtue, it has been maintained, had in it a touch of magnanimity of which Christian virtue cannot boast. “It may be said,” writes a well-known author, “that the sacrifice which Christ exacts is no more genuine than that recommended by the Epicurean; for He never fails to promise a full recompense in the world to come. Scarcely once in the Sermon on the Mount does He inculcate self-sacrifice without a reference to the other side of the account to the treasures God has in store for those who despise the gold and silver of the earth. And however much we may admire the Christian martyrs, yet how can we compare their

self-devotion with that of the Spartan 300, or the Roman Decius? Those heroes surrendered *all*, and looked forward to nothing but the joyless asphodel meadow or 'drear Cocytus with its languid stream.' But the Christian martyr might well die with exultation, for what he lost was poor in comparison with that which he hoped instantly to gain."¹

Now, it is not, I think, to be questioned, that to the compensation argument, in the crude form in which it has often been presented, the foregoing objection does hold good. And there are two points in which it may be shown to be relevant. In the first place, it may be said that pleasure or happiness is not a thing which can be directly aimed at. We are so constituted that happiness, at least the highest and purest happiness, is not to be got by seeking it, but it is to be got only by ignoring and forgetting it. We frustrate or mar enjoyment by thinking about it, and of set purpose making it an object of pursuit. "Its essential nature," it has been said, "is corrupted when it is made a business; the highest perfection of it is not among the prizes of exertion, but a bounty of nature, a grace of God. By contrivance and skill only an inferior sort can be

¹ *Ecce Homo* (11th edition), p. 114.

attained, to which the keenness, the glee, the racy bitter of the sweet is wanting." And the obvious reason for this is, that to get pleasure or happiness, we must first desire and attain something that brings pleasure or happiness unsought. The general law of our desires and affections is, not that the pleasure creates the desire for an object, but that the satisfaction of the desire creates the pleasure.¹ The desire must be first there, in order to the consciousness of pleasure in gratifying it. The appetite of hunger, for instance, is not created by the pleasure of eating, but must exist prior to there being any pleasure derived from it. And so with other and higher desires, such as the desire of praise, honour, power, wealth, fame. It is not the idea of the delight that will attend the satisfaction of these desires that creates them, but it is because of its being the satisfaction of original wants, that it is followed or accompanied by delight more or less intense.

And so is it with our moral and spiritual desires or affections, and most of all with the highest of them, the devotion of the religious man to the divine object of love and reverence. No anticipated reward, no evils to be averted or

¹ Cf. p. 58, above.

pleasure to be gained, can create the feeling where it does not already exist, nor can I by the vision of a future heaven get it to arise in my breast. If there be nothing in the Being I call God to call forth my sympathy, kindle my admiration, touch my heart; if in the contemplation of that ideal goodness and beauty of which all finite goodness and loveliness are but the reflexion, no touch of aspiration, no longing of reverential love arises within me; if, in other words, this desire come not as the expression of a free, unprompted, generous emotion, then no bribe even of everlasting happiness can ever force it to come.

But the second and main objection, in a moral and religious point of view, to any compensation theory of a future life is, that it is not really moral or religious. To induce a man to become moral or religious out of regard to ulterior advantages, would be to base morality or religion on a motive that destroys it. It is true that there is an immense gain which results from a pure and holy life, and from the exercise of elevated principles and affections. But to say this, is not inconsistent with the assertion that the intrusion of the desire for that gain vitiates and stifles the very principle with which it is associated. Knowledge may lead to

fame and fortune ; scholarly and scientific attainments may bring a man great reputation, a lucrative position, social rank and influence ; but the scientific spirit—as all would, I suppose, agree—is never genuine till the pure delight of intellectual pursuits, of thought and research, of the contact of the mind with truth, glows in a man's breast; and, apart from all ulterior results—nay, at the cost of many pains and disadvantages, is its own satisfaction and joy. So, again, with artistic pursuits. Painters, poets, musicians, are often keenly sensitive to reputation, and may be far from indifferent to the material gain which the practice of their art brings. But if there be not in a man's breast some spark at least of a genuine inspiration, something of the creative impulse which makes artistic production its own end and joy, he is not a true artist, but only a hireling in the realm of art. And still more profoundly true is this idea in its application to the spiritual life. If religion means love to God, reverence and devotion to the infinite truth and goodness, it is a principle which needs no prop of external profit to ensure its dominion over the spirit. To minds and hearts touched by it, it is as much its own end and blessedness, as light and beauty are the delight of the eye or

sweet melody of the ear. To seek something else by means of it, to cultivate religion for the sake of material or other benefits, is an impossible and self-contradictory notion ; for of love divine, still more than of love human, it holds good, that it needs no pleasure or reward to create it, and no compensation for the sacrifices to which it may lead.

But, though the compensation theory, in the crude form in which it has often been presented, is untenable, there is another aspect of it in which it is profoundly true. There are rewards in the spiritual life to which it is no selfishness to aspire—nay, which it is of the very essence of the spiritual life to seek after. There is no selfishness in a desire or aspiration which is in itself pure and noble, when it seeks for rewards in its own kind—in the desire of knowledge, for instance, when it seeks for ever larger and fuller opportunities and means of knowledge ; or in the love of art, when it seeks by ever new and fairer creations to attain to an ever-advancing realization of the beautiful. And this holds good in an especial manner of the moral and spiritual desires and affections. To seek the ever richer and fuller satisfaction of this order of desires is free from all taint of selfishness, because it is to

seek after a joy which, whilst it is the sweetest of which the soul of man is capable, is in its own nature the death of selfishness—the joy of absolute self-surrender to the will of God, and of self-sacrifice for the good of others. “More life and fuller” than we have ever attained, or can hope on earth to attain, deeper draughts from the eternal springs of thought and joy than here we can ever experience — this, so far from being a sordid aspiration, is only another expression for the most exalted goodness.

And it is here, let me say in conclusion, that the compensation theory passes into the higher argument reviewed in the last lecture—the argument which arises from the infinite capabilities of the human spirit, and their inadequate realization in this life. We know not, indeed, what we shall be. We cannot fill up the details of that ideal of moral and spiritual perfection to which, by its very make and structure, our nature points. But in two ways we can faintly conceive of the heaven of the future. We can think of it, negatively, as a world from which the evil that here mingles with and represses the good in ourselves and others shall have passed away—in which love shall be deeper, fuller, more unmingled than the love that here we know,

purity shall no more be darkened by the faintest shadow of defilement, and from hearts at one with themselves and with God, all restlessness of earthly desire or passion shall have vanished away. And we can think of it, positively, by reflecting what life would be, if the rarest and highest spiritual experience of the best and noblest of mankind became the unbroken and continuous experience of all—if, that is, the moral and spiritual attainments, which the best of men reach in their best and highest moments, should become universal. For even here, in this earthly life of ours, there are moments, few and far between, in the experience of such men, when the infinitude of the spiritual nature reveals itself, when the gross vesture of carnality seems to fall away, and a latent splendour of spiritual nobleness, nothing less than divine, to be disclosed. When thought comes with a rush of inspiration on the mind of the man of genius, when in the experience of very holy and saintly men infinite hopes and aspirations flow in upon the soul, raising it above the littleness and narrowness of life, quelling every ignoble thought, silencing every baser passion ; or when the call for some great act of self-sacrifice has arisen, and the sense of duty triumphs over all

lower impulses, and the deed of heroism and self-devotion is done—in these and like experiences there are premonitions of a larger, diviner life within this nature of ours. Alas! the holiest of men are just those who are most sensible how rare and transient such experiences are, how much their ordinary life falls short of the divine ideal which such visitations disclose. But they point at least to the possibility of a coming time, when every disturbing, conflicting limitation shall have passed away, when nothing shall any longer check the flow of that diviner life which unites us to the unseen and eternal.

But perhaps some one will say, is not the fatal objection to all such speculation this, that it deals only with possibility and not with proof? At most, it indicates in man capabilities of intellectual and spiritual progress, germs of greatness and blessedness in the far futurity, but not that they have come, or will come, to anything real. Have we no experience of such a thing as unfulfilled promise even as regards the present life? Is there not on this side the grave many a blighted life, many a nature instinct with capabilities that after all run to waste? How do I know that it will be otherwise hereafter, that even the nature that seems to

grow and expand to the last is not doomed to extinction at the moment of death?

My reply is, that to the man who has no faith in God these questions are absolutely unanswerable. If, underneath all the phenomena of the world in which we live, we can discern no principle of reason and order, no absolute intelligence and love, then, indeed, our hope of immortality may be but an illusion and a dream, then, indeed, the world's course may be the thing of meaningless waste and reckless incongruity which such a supposition involves. But if there be a God, an infinite loving wisdom which has endowed us with the capacity of knowing, loving, and communing with itself, and which has made the order of the world a system of moral education, preparing and disciplining us for a career of never-ending goodness and blessedness hereafter, can it be that all this vast moral system, with all the hopes and aspirations it encourages us to cherish, is but an elaborate and cruel deception? It is impossible to believe it, *if* there be a God; and *if* that God be manifested in that which is best and greatest in man, above all, in the man Christ Jesus. It is from this point we begin, and it is to this that all our arguments return. If there be a God, and if, as Scripture teaches and the deepest thought of

philosophy seems to prove, He is a Spiritual Being, the Father of all spirits, then we need not fear that this treasure, which now for a time we hold, as it were, in an earthen vessel, will ever be lost. "The world passeth away, and the lust of it; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

ERRATA.

Vol. I. p. cxxviii. line 25. *For '1890-91' read '1892-93.*
P. cxxix. line 9. *For '1896' read '1895-96.'*

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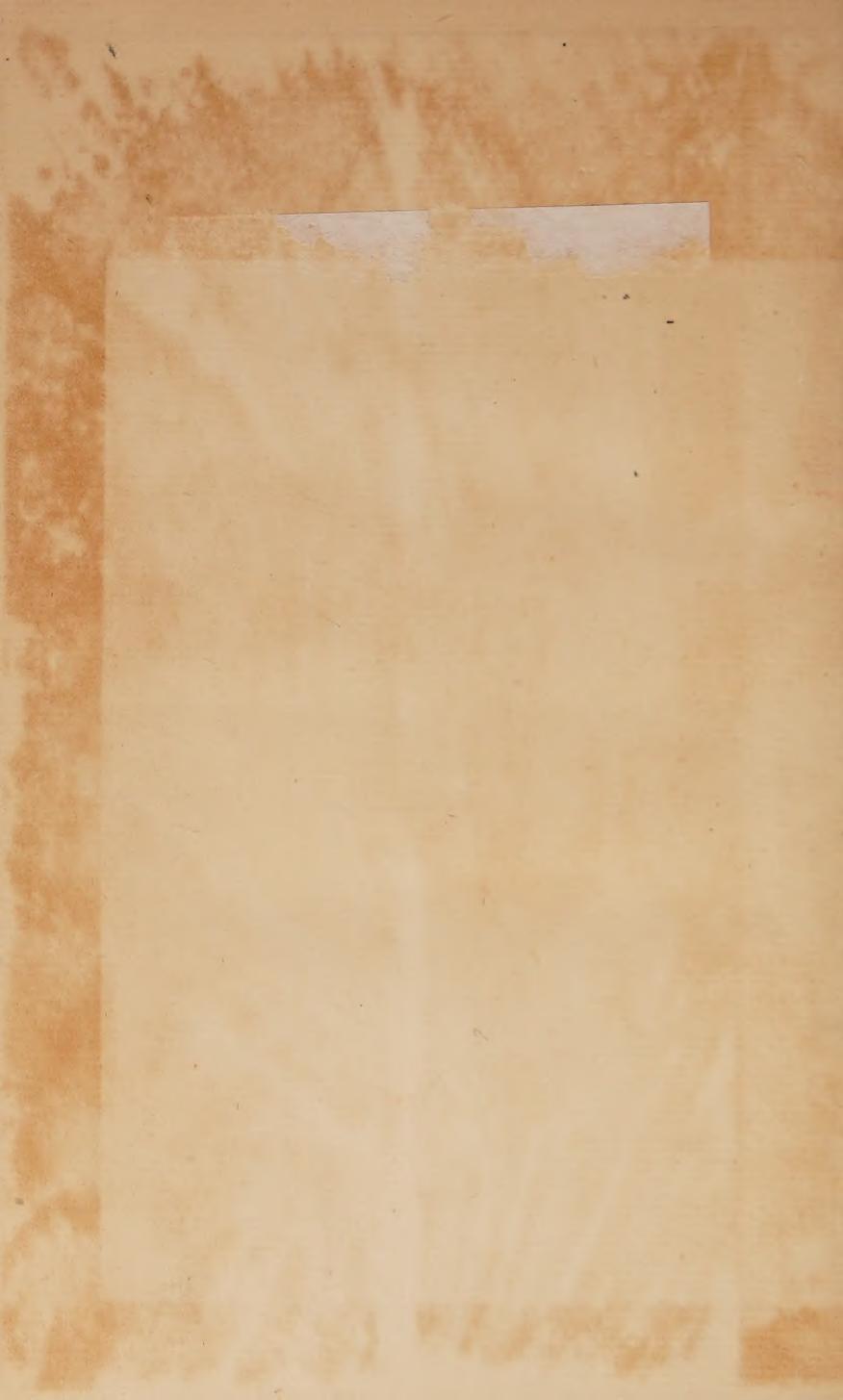
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